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AN INTRODUCTION
TO
THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ



By

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PROFESSOR EMERITUS

PREFACE

The Bhagavad-Gita, one of the Pratishthana-trayi symbolises the highest principles of Hinduism with its extensive philosophical and religious literature. In a span of 700 slokas it provides an insight into the heart and soul of Hinduism with its lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. It conveys the essence of the Upanishads, expounds the secret doctrine of the Vedic religion, and provides the key to all the six systems of philosophy. In it one finds the fire of poetry eliciting the truth from the deeps of the mind, with the realization of God as its theme - to become one with Him through action (Karma), meditation & knowledge (dhyana-jnana) or love (bhakti). It brings the message of deliverance between the reach of all. The message of the Gita is universal in its scope and pronouncement, opening the way to all the winds that blow. It is a work of imperishable significance with its essential purpose of teaching us a way out of bondage, enabling the practical man to attain bliss by love of God and fulfilment of duty without disparaging knowledge. Its popularity is assessed by Aldous Huxley who finds the Gita as 'one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of perennial philosophy ever to have been made'. Millions have read the Gita, read it, taught it and found in it 'largest hope of the souls Godhead striving'. It is equally described as 'an oilless lamp eternally burning in our temple of knowledge' as also 'a bouquet composed of the beautiful flowers of the spiritual truths collected from the Upanisads'.

This essence of Indian wisdom, and one of the greatest philosophical and spiritual classics of the world, would have

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remained an obscure piece of literature, known only to the learned pandits or Brahmanical scholars, had it not been translated into English by Wilkins in 1785 with a Foreword from Warren Hastings, and published in England at the Company's expense. Two years later it appeared in French version and thus exposed the philosophical mind of the ancient Hindus to the western world. As noted by the first Governor-General, 'it is a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unequalled and single exception among all the known religions of mankind'. It was advertised as 'the antiquity of the original and the veneration in which it hath been held for ages by a considerable portion of the human race, must render it one of the greatest curiosities ever presented'. It was rightly predicted by Warren Hastings that 'it will survive when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist'.

The Gita is aptly described as the labyrinth of interpretations. Scholars through the ages have used it either as a base or a supporting column for raising the structure of their philosophical view points. Its raw material has been fruitfully utilized by the commentators, past and present, classical and formal, oriental and occidental in projecting their theories about God and man, salvation and suffering, freedom and bondage, and the different paths of deliverance through knowledge, action and devotion. A study of the Gita historiography through the ages thus becomes the sin qua non - a matter of prime necessity, before one ventures to make a fresh study of this classical work which according to a recent publication 'is neither a patch work quilt nor a variegated tapestry. It is rather a stuff like fine

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The life is so fully described as the history of India
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yarn from which different patterns might be woven from time to time, and which spiritual aspirants have woven into the very fine texture of their lives'.

The present study concentrates on the contributions of commentators on the Gita through the ages. Sankara and his Vedantism is probably the earliest attempt in this context. He holds that while action is essential for the purification of the mind, it falls away when wisdom is attained. He rejects the view of Jnana-Karma samuccaya - the amalgam of knowledge and action. Rāmaṇuja in his Gītārthasamgraha takes Brahman the highest reality. His Viśiṣṭādvaita is monism qualified as theism, with Vedic gods as the servants of the Supreme God, and the essence of spiritual life is complete surrender to Him. God, according to Madhavaçārya, is attainable through bhakti or devotion, rejecting both the monism of Sankara as also the qualified monism of Rāmaṇuja. So also the views of other classical commentators, such as Nimbāraka with his dvaita-advaita - dual non-dual doctrine, the pure non-dualism - Suddha - advaita of Vallabhāçārya, the last in the series are noticed, along with the comments of Madhusūdana Sarasvati and Śrīdharaśwami. Among the later commentators, Jñānesvara of Mahārāstra demands consideration.

The western response to intellectual curiosity provided by the Gita in the nineteenth century was one of a happy note. Robertson, a Doctor of Divinity and Rector of the University of Edinburgh, enjoined his countrymen to look upon the Hindus as descendants of the people who had attained a very high degree of improvement many ages before the last steps towards civilization had been taken in any part of Europe. The Gita translation was epoch making. It marked the beginning of Sanskrit scholarship

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in Europe, with the translations in French by J.P. Parand in 1789 and by William Von Schlegel in German directly from Sanskrit in 1825. Another German scholar Wilhelm Von Humboldt lectured on the Gita in 1826 at the Berlin Academy. He shared the view of Kant that 'India was the home of consummate wisdom and virtue' and in his words the Gita's ideas were the deepest and the most elevated which the world had to offer. Its contents were universally human, providing message of oneness with God and with Nature.

The Americans too were captivated by the charms of the Gita. Ralph Waldeo Emerson, the American Author, found in the Gita, the synthesis of theory (sāṅkhya) and action (yoga) under the canopy of duty (dharma). He found confirmation of his philosophical thinking in the Gita with stress on the ethical value of life. Thoreau² contributed on the discipline of action (karmayoga). He was convinced of Gita's superiority. 'In every man's brain is Sanskrit'. His liberal temper, eclectic outlook and intellectual curiosity made him an admirer of this Hindu scripture. He was much impressed by the ideal of the Yogi and believed in material poverty as one of its facets. The life-negating ideal of Hindu asceticism was for him a more refined and nobler luxury'.

Among the European contributors to Gita study were Burnouf whose French translation along with the Sanskrit text appeared in 1861. He offered the Gita to the French public as a model of Sanskrit verse and not merely as a philosophical treatise. Its second edition appeared in 1895. Two scholars Franz Lorinzer and Lassen, however, had their reservations. The former, a theologian and not a śāṅkṛitist, in his transla-

tion and commentary proposed Christian influence on the Gita which was welcomed by the Norwegian scholar Lassen. Garbe, quoting Barth, however, considered ~~it~~ the suggestion to be a product of poetic fancy and irrelevant. He raised another point - namely the division of the Gita into two portions - the earlier theistic and the later pantheistic. This suggestion was taken up sometime back by Basham who proposes two or three strata in the composition of this work.

The interest of the western scholars seems to be declining between the fifties and sixties of the last century, with scholars like Weber and Monier-Williams taking only a side glance of it. Max-Muller, the Editor of the Sacred Book of the East, series entrusted its translation to K.T. Telang, an Indian Jurist. Among the contemporary English translators of the time are John Davies and Edwin Arnold. The former published it (1882) with a good introduction and a commentary, while the latter brought out its translation in blank verse (1885). These scholars as well discussed the questions of the date of the Bhagavad-Gita and the historicity of Krishna.

The Indian phase in the Gita study is supposed to have begun in the eighties of the last century. It is characterised as an offshoot of Renaissance, Radicalism and Theosophy. The creation of a new-literate class with the background of western education and national sentiments found in the Gita - a force to generate the intellectual political and spiritual urge of the time. Vivekananda and his exhortations at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and elsewhere exposed the all-embracing principles of Hinduism and the importance of the Gita in his

The first of these is the fact that the Indian mind is not a tabula rasa. It is a mind which has been shaped by a long and rich tradition of thought and action. This tradition is not only a part of the Indian mind, but it is also a part of the Indian culture. The Indian mind is not a passive recipient of external influences, but it is an active participant in the process of cultural change. This is the first of the three points which I wish to make.

The second point is that the Indian mind is not a homogeneous entity. It is a mind which is divided into many different groups, each with its own distinct characteristics. These groups are not only different from each other, but they are also different from the Indian mind as a whole. This is the second of the three points which I wish to make.

The third point is that the Indian mind is not a static entity. It is a mind which is constantly changing and evolving. This is the third of the three points which I wish to make.

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lectures. In the second decade of the twentieth century Bala Gangadhar Tilak brought out his magnum opus - Gītārahasya - in Marathi (1911). The Karmayoga, according to him, is founded on knowledge in which Devotion (bhakti) is the principal factor. Both Jnana - Knowledge and Bhakti - Devotion point to Karma - Action as the ultimate goal of life.

According to Gandhi, our body is the battle-field, Lord Kṛṣṇa in our heart, the Kauravas represent the satanic impulses and Arjuna and others stand for the Godward impulses, with the eternal conflict going on in us. Anāsakti-yoga - the doctrine of Renunciation is the Sun round which revolve the three planets of devotion, knowledge and action. Anāsakti demands desireless action and the dedication of all actions to God. Ahiṃsā - non-violence and satya - truth are the two sides of his sakti.

Aurobindo Ghosh and Vinobha Bhave too have interpreted the Bhagavad-Gita. The former takes it as a book on spiritual life and our actions should be undertaken for the sake of attainment of God. Our highest ideal ought to be to surrender ourselves to the Master of Existence - the great finale of human achievement. The 'Song Celestial', according to Bhave, serves to destroy illusion that covers the heart of humanity. A knowledge of the truth is essential for conforming to one's essential duties. Action - karma is a means to inward purity. The karmayogi's work is a form of prayer (japa). The clear mind reveals the image of jnana or true knowledge. The performance of one's duty (svadharma) and the inward attitude of mind (vikarma) are both necessary and complimentary to each other.

Several other important Indian commentators on the Gita

include Radhakrisnan, Nataraja Guru, Mahesha Yogi^s, the theists Swami's Prabhopada, Chinamayananda, Swarupananda & Tapasyananda and Gambhiranand. Annie Besant and Bhagwan Das also published a free translation of the Bhagavad-Gita. The Indian philosophers Radhakrishnan, S.N. Das Gupta and M. Hiriyanna have also contributed on the Gita in their 'History of Indian Philosophy'. Of late, an old pupil of the Indian Administrative Service Arvinda Sharma, who is now a Don at the University of Sydney, has brought out a comprehensive study entitled 'The Hindu Gita'. It offers a concise yet comprehensive and systematic survey of the main classical Hindu interpretations of the Bhagavad-Gita.

The western world revived its interest in this great work though it was considered as being less relevant to the present than to the past. L.D. Barnett translated it in 1905, followed by Douglas Hill in 1927, who concentrated on its theistic aspect, recognising the absolute supremacy of Krishna-Vasudeva who personifies the Brahman. The two European scholars Etienne Lamotte and Rudolf Otto as well contributed on this subject. The former brought out an excellent, scholarly and clearly objective study, while the latter was interested in ferreting out the original Gita, and distinguishing it from later additions. Another European M. Winternitz has made a good survey of Gita literature in his 'History of Indian Literature'. The best commentary along with the translation is provided by Franklin Edgerton who calls it the 'Holy ^{Hindu} Indian Bible'. His analytical approach of the contents are worth emulation and close study. He clearly admits the unity of the Gita. Zachner, the Oxford don, as successor to Radhakrisnan, as well wrote on the Bhagavad-Gita with its Text, Translation and Commentary concentrating on the teachings of the Gita in detail.

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The best Introduction and translation, however, is by Juan Maspero who integrates his personality with the spirit and faith of the Gita. It is taken by the author as a little shrine in a vast temple complex. He as well notices the musical symphony in it and finds the greatness of the Bhagavad-Gita as the greatness of the universe, providing one light - the source of all religions. Some other commentaries include Richard Gotshalk, Mohini. M. Chatterjie and Sylvain Levi et J.T. Stickney. 'The Universal Gita' by J. Sharpe notices the western contribution to the study of Bhagavad-Gita in analogy to the Hindu one by Sharma. Both have the same Publisher. The universal aspect of the Bhagavad-Gita is accepted by western scholars. So also its date is now taken to be in the fifth century B.C.

A survey of the Bhagavad-Gita literature within the last two centuries, along with its analytical study and dissection into different sections relating to Knowledge, Action and Devotion forming one integrated unit is made in this volume. It forms the first part of the study of the Bhagavad-Gita, serving as an Introduction to the others to follow. The subsequent ones would cover the text along with translation and comments and the role of the Gita in modern life. While the study of this sacred text, 'the Holy Bible of the Hindus', has engaged the attention of so many scholars, classical and modern, my attempt has been to spray the gems provided by them in a single tray. How far I have been successful, I leave it for others to assess.

The inspiration for this work has some divine mandate as its source, and so also the family sanskāras its contributing factors. My father had committed the entire Gita to memory, my younger daughter Taruna (alas ! no more) had studied it as a

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teen age. It is, therefore, natural that I should dedicate this work to their memory. I have found this work the solace of my life and it is expected to provide solace to me when I finally bid adieu to this Karmabhumi.

The Lord says in the Gita :

dehino'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam jara
tatha dehantaraprap̄tira dhiraṣ tatra na muhyati

(II. 13)

As to the embodied (soul) in this body
 Comes childhood, youth, old age,
 So the coming to another body,
 the wiseman is not perplexed therein.

B. N. PURI

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INTRODUCTION

The Bhagavad-gita is the embodiment of the highest principles of Hinduism with its extensive philosophical and religious literature. It not only provides insight into the heart and soul of Hinduism, but equally conveys lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. It is neither a Śruti nor a Smṛiti, but in a span of 700 slokas conveys the essence of the Upanishads and expounds the secret doctrines of the vedic religion. It provides the key to all the six systems of philosophy. It is one of the Pratisthāna-Traya - the three pillars of Vedantic philosophy - the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahma Sūtra. It is nearer to the true idea of philosophic poetry. In it one finds the fire of poetry eliciting the truth from the depths of the mind. It is born of philosophy and religion, and both the currents run side by side into each other. It is a splendid song which has its theme - the realization of God, to become one with Him through action (Karma), meditation (dhyāna-jñāna) or love (bhakti), and finally aims at the realization of Truth. The doctrine of strict and unswerving adherence to Duty - the stern voice of God - in a situation surcharged with softness and even effeminacy (Kṛiavyam) has been preached with such vehemance and effect that it becomes the key phrase of the Gita's message and philosophy and lies at the foundation of all individual and national greatness. The performance of one's duty in a pure spirit of righteousness and detachment without carving for the fruits ensures immunity from disappointment. Such an attitude provides equipoise in

The Vedantist is the exponent of the highest principles of Hinduism, with its extensive philosophical and religious life. It is not only a philosophy, but a life, a heart and soul of Hinduism, but equally conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. It is neither a religion nor a philosophy, but in a sense of 700 closes between the essence of the Upanishads and expounds the secret doctrines of the Vedic religion. It provides the key to all the six systems of philosophy. It is one of the Upanishadic texts - the three pillars of Vedantic philosophy - the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutra. It is nearer to the true idea of philosophical society. In it one finds the true of poetry elicited, the truth from the depths of the mind. It is born of philosophy and religion, and both the currents run side by side into each other. It is a spiritual force which has its theme - the realization of God, to become one with Him through action (Karma), meditation (Dhyana) or love (Bhakti), and finally aims at the realization of truth. The doctrine of spirit and unswerving adherence to duty - the stern voice of God - in a situation such as this with softness and even effeminacy (Ananya) has been preserved with such reverence and effect that it becomes the key phrase of the Upanishad's message and philosophy and life of the Upanishad. The notion of all individual and national greatness. The perfection of one's duty in a pure spirit of righteousness and detachment without craving for the fruits ensures freedom from disappointment. Such an attitude provides exclusive in

different and equally difficult situations in life. The struggling individual experiencing a void deadness in heart, in a mood of despair and despondency has nothing to lose if he performs the duty imposed on him with an unflinching faith in God. To Him, he must fully surrender with the records of his deeds and misdeeds.

Further, the path of progress towards enlightenment lies through suffering and self-abnegation and no one is denied the privilege to tread on it. In fact, the message of deliverance is within the reach of all through bhakti or devotion. An individual freed from passion and fear and purified by the fire of wisdom attains communion with God. Krishna of the Gita stands for the infinite in the finite, the God in man. The message of the Gita is universal in scope. It does not suggest a missionary movement, rigid and insular in approach, stressing its doctrines and disparaging others. On the other hand, it is catholic rather than critical in approach and spirit. It opens the way to all the winds that blow. It provides room for all forms of worship, endorsing the Vedic concept of 'Sages name variously that which is One' (ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti). Its message is thus secular (ekatvam vibhaktesu). There is no break up of culture into different compartments, nor negation of other's thoughts and practices. It appeals through its force of thought, grandness of vision and zeal of devotion dipped into sweetness of spiritual emotion.

The Richest and most beautiful blossom :

The Bhagavad-gita is equally spoken of as one of the richest and most beautiful blossom on the many branches tree

different and equally difficult situations in life. The struggling individual experiences a void, weakness in heart. In a mood of despair and despondency he is unable to face it. He performs the duty imposed on him with an unflinching faith in God. To him, he must fully surrender with the records of his deeds and misdeeds.

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The richest and most beautiful blossom :

The Bhagavad-gita is equally spoken of as one of the

richest and most beautiful blossoms on the many branches of

of Indian literature. 'It is the deepest and sublimest production', in the words of William Von Schlegel who translated it into German in 1826, 'that the world possesses'. It is as well called 'a work of imperishable significance, providing insights that are valid for all times and for all religions'. The Gita bases its message of action on a philosophy of life requiring us to know the meaning of life before engaging in action. The essential purpose of the Gita, according to Sankara, is to teach us a way out of bondage and not merely enjoin action. The practical aspect of life in no way disparages the dignity of thought. In fact, Knowledge (jñāna) and Action (karma) co-exist. They are complimentary to each other and not exclusive or independent of each other. A man is integrated by spiritual exercise, considers himself as the agent and not the real doer (aḥamkāra vimūḍha ātmā kartāham ity-manyati). The man of 'steady wisdom' (sthiti-prajñā) is an ideal human being.

Integration of different elements :

The Gita integrates the different elements within the Hindu system and provides a comprehensive synthesis, free and full, profound and subtle. It reconciles the different currents of thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the teachings of the Upanisads concentrating on the transcendent Brahman, the Bhagavatas' theism and soft compassion, the dualism of Sāṅkhya and the meditation of Yoga. (Sāṅkhya-Yogau Prithakbālah prayadanti na paṇḍitah). Thus, the living elements of Hindu life and thought are integrated into an organic unity leading towards the same end. The Gita, according to another German

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scholar, Otto Strauss, 'is so popular because it unites the great spiritual antimonies or conflicting laws of Indian metaphysics and ethics into one harmonious whole'. In his words, 'it gives the assurance to the practical man that he will also be able to attain bliss by love of God and fulfilment of Dharma'. The simple poetic language of the Gita conveys the message of the Lord 'to the very heart without discarding the intellect'. In fact, the path of knowledge (jnana-marga), that of devotion (bhakti-marga) and that of action (pravritti) and abstention (nivritti) are all put on the same footing. The wise man who lives for knowledge and the practical man - that of the world - who follows his dharma co-exist in the Gita.

Theism and Theopanism & Their Co-existence :

It has been rightly proposed that for the Hindus Theism and Theopanism are no contradictions that preclude each other, but different attempts to dive into the unfathomable nature of God who is so inscrutable to human ingenuity. We find in this work Lord Krishna, the highest God Vishnu, in person proclaiming his doctrine of salvation. He is the eternal omniscient and omnipotent Lord of the world who grants salvation to those who have faith in Him, and worship Him with unswerving devotion. He equally appears before Arjuna in a brilliant celestial shape with many eyes and mouths, and a tremendous vision in which the universe in all its variety is seen as the Lord's body - all its multiplicity converging on to One (XI. 9-13). Here He is portrayed as all-consuming Time. Arjuna in terrified ecstasy confesses

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Indian and Theosophical View of Existence :

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Him as God (35-46). All things are strung on Him like pearls on string. (Sut্রে মাংগনা iva). In the Gita the different views on the nature of God have found the most beautiful and perfect expression.

Gita's Popularity - Universal :

The popularity of the Gita is not confined to India and to the Hindus alone. It has its universal acceptance. In the words of Aldous Huxley, 'the Gita is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians but for all mankind. The Bhagavad-gita is perhaps the most systematic statement of the Perennial Philosophy. The Gita provides a vision of truth - profound and impressive - opening new vistas for the mind of man. It equally accepts assumptions which are part of past tradition. It thus integrates the past with the thoughts and feelings of the people of its time.

Millions have heard the Gita, read it, taught it and found in it largest hope of 'the soul's Godward striving'. And their belief has not been utterly vain ; for the Gita has a Gospel to deliver, telling of a consecration of life's every work to the self-less service of God, and an infinite Love that at every place and every time pours forth its illimitable grace to all that seek after it. This is the assessment by an English Professor of Sanskrit, L.D.Barnett, who translated this work more than eight decades back. The Indian side is best represented by Dvijendranath Tagore and Swami Vivekanand. The former takes it as 'the oilless lamp eternally burning in our Temple of

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Knowledge. Let all the philosophies of the west shine their brightest, the Light of our Little Lamp will shine above them all, eclipsing them'. Vivekanand in his modest tone takes the Gita as 'a bouquet composed of the beautiful flowers of spiritual truths collected from the Upanishads'.

Gita - the essence of Indian wisdom :

As proposed earlier, the Bhagavad-gita is the essence of Indian Vedic wisdom and one of the great philosophical and spiritual classics of the world, presented in the form of a dialogue at the battle field between Lord Krishna, the supreme personality of God-head and his intimate friend (sakha) and devotee (bhakta) Arjuna who wavers between duty and attachment. This spiritual testament in eighteen chapters is meant to dispel Arjuna's disillusion and prepare him for the call to perform his duty. The Pandava warrior admits in the end that his confusion is destroyed and through the Lord's grace he has regained a proper way of thinking. With doubts dispelled he stands ready to respond to Krishna's bidding. (XVIII.73). This 'poem of crisis' in fact covers all aspects of life and its philosophical problems. The ways to God realization - through knowledge and wisdom (jñāna), and Yoga -.implying the performance of action qualified by a total dissociation from its fruits, and, of course, with bhakti or unqualified devotion, are properly projected and fully explained. These paths are not exclusive in character, but are inter-connected and inter-linked; and one cannot do without the other. The essence of all the scriptures could be traced in the Bhagavadgita - rightly called Sarvasāstramayī - 'the compendium of all scriptures'.

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It alone need be read, sung, recited, studied, taught, pondered and assimilated properly. It is as well proposed that, there is no need for studying anything else when Gita has emerged directly from the lotus lip of God Visnu. (Gita-Sugita kartavya kim-anaih sastra samgrahaiti : Yo sūyam Padmanābhasya mukhapadma vinismrita). Its primary aim is to lead the jīva, merged in the ocean of existence due to ignorance to the realization of God.

Man's realization of God :

With this objective in view the Gita prescribes the means through which man realizes God even while scrupulously following his worldly avocation and the duties connected with it. Two paths are prescribed for this - the one of Knowledge or Sāṅkya Yoga and the other of Action - Karma Yoga. When a man worships God recognising Him as one with him, it is called the path of Knowledge. When it is carried on in terms of his duty, it is comprised in the yoganīṣṭā or the path of action. Above all, devotion or bhakti stands supreme. It is accorded the highest place and the principal mean of God-realization. Devotion, however, forms part of Yoga. The follower of the path of knowledge (Sāṅkhya) finding all objects as illusory or unreal, no longer claims himself to be the doer of those actions. (naiva-kimcit-karomi-iti-yukto manyet tatvavit. II.8). Constantly identifying himself with the all pervading spirit of God, who is Truth. Consciousness and Bliss, all rolled into One, He ceases to recognise anything other than God. The follower of Yoga being equipoised in success and failure, renouncing attachment and the desire for fruits, performs all actions at the command of the Lord. Resigning himself to God in thought, word and deed, he

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meditates with faith and reverance on His divine form along with His name, virtues and glory. The path of Yoga is not divorced from Devotion. In fact Karmayoga is dominated by Devotion involving offering of actions to God and performing actions for the sake of God.

The Three Paths & their Interactions :

The Gita discusses at length the paths of Devotion, Knowledge and Actions. The Lord, however, exhorts Arjuna to follow the path of Action with special emphasis on Devotion. (mayi-sarvāṇi karmanī samnyasya. III.30). This equally applies to the path of knowledge and wisdom. (mayy-arpita mano-buddhir. VIII.7) ; (mayya-eva mana adhatsva, mayi buddhim nivesya. XII.8). The beginning and end of the discourse are also marked by a spirit of self-surrender, as for instance, in the prelude to the discourse, Arjuna being tainted by the weakness or vice of faint-heartedness (kāpanyadōsa) and his mind puzzled with regard to duty (dharma-saṁmudhacetah) places himself into the hands of the Lord for advice and guidance. The word prapaṇam (sisyaste, ham sādhi mām tvām prapaṇam. II.7), is significant in this context. So also at the end of the discourse the Lord enjoins Arjuna to resign all his duties to Him and Him alone (Sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja. XVIII. 66). This is to be read in the context of an earlier view in the same concluding chapter where Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna not to abandon one's duty even though it might be tainted with blemish (sahayam karma sadoṣam api na tyajet. XVIII.48). In the words of the Lord, the Karmayogi who depends on Me attains by My grace the eternal, imperishable state ever though performing all actions. (sarva-kammāṇy api sadā kurvāṇo mad vyapā śrayah, mat prasādā avāpanoti

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mat prasādā eva), mat prasādā eva

sasvatam padam avyayam (XVIII.56).

The Secret of Action :

While the truth about Devotion and Knowledge is revealed in detail, the secret of Action is equally explained in a wider context. Without performing action man does not attain actionlessness or perfection in Karmayoga. (na karmani anārambhan naiskarmyam puruso 'a'snute. III.4). So also he does not reach perfection in the realm of Knowledge by ceasing to act (na ca sannyasanad eva siddhim samadhiḡaccheṭi (III.4). He who performs action disinterestedly controlling the mind and senses is the best of man (Karmendriyah Karmayogani asakatah sa visisyate. III.7). Action is superior to inaction (karma jyayoh hyakarmanah. III.8). He who enjoys objects without performing his duties is a thief (apradayaṃho yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ. III.12). In performing one's duty one's mind should not be deluded by egotism. (adamkāra - vimuddhatma kartāham iti maiyate. III.27). Further, the doer has right only in his action and not in its results (karmany-evadhikāres-te mā phalesu kadācana. II. 47). The Gita has also equanimity as the dominant note in man's life. He is enjoined to adopt an equipoise state of mind in joy and sorrow for attaining immortality (samdukha-sukham dhīram so'mritatvāya kalpate. III. 15), and be ever-tempered in success and failure (siddhyasiddhyah samo-bhūtvā. III. 49). Evenness of temper is called Yoga. (Samatvam Yoga Ucyate (ibid). One is equally expected to show dexterity in action (yogah karmesu kausalam. II. 50).

The Yoga of Gita - Progressive and Multiple :

The Yoga of the Gita is a progressive and multiple

action (Kailash, 11. 50).

The Secret of Action :

While the first stage devotion and knowledge is revealed in detail, the secret of action is equally explained in a wider context. Without performing action man does not attain perfection or perfection in Karma. (Kailash, 11. 51). He also does not reach perfection in the realm of knowledge by ceasing to act (Kailash, 11. 52). The man performs action of interest controlling the mind and senses in the best of man (Kailash, 11. 53). Action is superior to inaction (Kailash, 11. 54). He who enjoys objects without performing his duties is a thief (Kailash, 11. 55). In performing one's duty one's mind should not be deluded by egoism (Kailash, 11. 56). Further, the door has right only in his action and not in its results (Kailash, 11. 57). The Gita has also explained as the door-keeper (Kailash, 11. 58). He is enjoined to adopt an equanimous state of mind in joy and sorrow for attaining immortality (Kailash, 11. 59). He is ever-tempered in success and failure (Kailash, 11. 60). Evenness of temper is called Yoga (Kailash, 11. 61). One is equally expected to show dexterity in action (Kailash, 11. 62).

The Yoga of Gita - Progressive and Multiple :

process. It does not visualise any loss even in failure, for every sincere effort is a gain in itself. Its study involves some form of discipline in life, control of the senses and purity of conduct, unselfish performance of duties in a detached manner without caring for results, control of the mind with the elimination of passions that disturb it, periodically turning it inwards for silent, concentrated meditation, and finally surrendering oneself to God's grace. These practical suggestions help man in realizing God and be one with Him. The Gita serves as a lamp that lights our path in spite of the lamp in our hands. The way of the chequered world is one of light and shadow still holding the light we carry to steer our way clear through this path of ignorance and delusion. As pointed out in the Gita, there is nothing like waste of effort in this, nor is there any danger of retrogression by reason of shortcomings in practice. Even a little of ^a Dharma saves man from the great evil (svalpam-apyasya dharmasya trāyato mahato bhayāt. II. 40).

Knowledge and Liberation :

The positive theory that by perfect Knowledge man can control his destiny and that the realization of truth shall liberate him from the process of coming and going (avāgaman), the repeated births and deaths is equally stressed in the Gita. In many verses the importance of Knowledge is properly stressed. 'Even if thou shouldst be the worst of all sinned, merely by the boat of knowledge thou shall cross over all (the sea of) evil (api ced pāpebhyah sarvebhyah papā krittamah sarvam jñan plavenaiva vrijinam santarisyati. IV. 36). In fact, the fire

of Knowledge burns all the deeds to ashes (jñagnih sarvakarmani bhasmasat kurute. IV. 37) as the kindled fire does with the fire wood. Ignorance is fatal and the ignorant doubter cannot hope for bless (ajñā's ca-sradaha nas'ca samsayatma vinasatyati. IV. 40). Man is therefore enjoined to cut doubt with the sword of knowledge. (ajñān-sambhūtani hrīsthani jñānasinātmanah chillvainam sansayam. IV.42). Further knowledge is better than mere ritual religion. In the words of the Gita, 'Better than material sacrifice is the sacrifice (that consists) of knowledge (sreyam dravyamayad yajñaj jñān yajñah), for all actions without any exception culminate in knowledge (sarvam karmakhilam jñāna parisamā pyate. IV.33). This knowledge of the supreme religious truth concerning ~~in~~ man in relation to God, ensures his entry into the region of the Lord without taking another birth (tyaktvā dehāni punarjanma naiti mam eti. IV. 10).

This aspect is equally stressed after many many centuries by several western writers. Shakespeare describes knowledge as the wing whereby we fly to heaven (Henry. IV. Pt. 2) and Bacon shortly afterwards considers knowledge as a rich store-house for the glory of the creator and the relief of man's estate (Advancement of Learning). 'All knowledge', according to him, is to be limited by religion. Knowledge is the key that first opens the hard heart, enlarges the affections, and opens the way for men into the kingdom of heaven.

Knowledge as a means of Salvation :

The Gita as well refers to jñānacakṣu (15.10 ; 13.34), the eye of knowledge with the person acquiring intellectual

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vision (jñānacakṣuṣaḥ. XV. 10) and its use (jñānacakṣuṣa. XIII.34). The former alone knows the relation of the soul with the body (pāśyanti jñāna cakṣuṣaḥ), while with this eye of knowledge (jñāna cakṣuṣa) those who perceive the difference between the kṣetra and kṣetrajña, and the phenomenon of liberation from Prakṛiti with her evolutes reach the supreme eternal spirit (param mokṣam yānti). Many verses in the Gīta recognise knowledge as a means of salvation. The other ways are equally effective. The Gīta is tolerant and catholic and does not condemn or extol any one of these at the expense of others. At several places both Sāṅkhya and Yoga are considered as one providing true vision. As pointed out earlier, only fools say that Sāṅkhya and Yoga are different, not the wise. One who devotes himself to one of these two, obtains completely the fruit of both. They both as well lead to the same goal - the Supreme Weal (ekam sāṅkhyam ca yogam ca yah pāśyati sa pāśyati. V. 5). The intellectual way is, however, difficult and not meant for the people in general. The disciplined activity as well ensures knowledge in oneself (Yoga-sāmsiddhā svayam kālenātman vindati. IV. 38). Yoga or disciplined activity could therefore be taken as an auxiliary means useful in gaining the knowledge that shall bring release in the same way as devotion to God is regarded elsewhere. 'To those ever-disciplined ones that revere Me lovingly, I grant the discipline of mind whereby they come unto Me (dadāmi buddhi yogam tām yena mām upāyāntīte. X. 10). The darkness born of ignorance is thus dispelled by the shining light of wisdom (ajñānajaṁ tamah nasyānty atmabhāvastho jñāna dīpena bhāsvatā. X. 11).

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 the discipline of mind whereby they come unto me (brahma).
 Yogaṁ tanuṃ yogaṁ naṃ upaśanti. X. 10. The darkness born of
 ignorance is thus dispelled by the kindled light of wisdom.
 (brahmaṇaṃ kṣetrajñānaṃ ātmanāṃ brahmaṇaṃ kṣetrajñānaṃ).

Disciplined Activity :

The Gītā's stress on disciplined activity is supposed to have an intellectual background. Further, actions concern the matter exclusively. They cannot affect the soul which is beyond them. The person so enlightened is thus indifferent to actions and their results. As to the three 'strands' of material nature - the sattva, rajas and tamas - bringing in their train illumination, and activity and delusion he neither loathes them on appearance nor longs for them in their absence. He participates in a disinterested manner in actions without being disturbed by three strands - gunas - of (matter), and stands firm and unmoved (gunair yo na vicālyate. XIV. 23). He is ever established in self, taking woe and joy alike, taking a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value (sama-duhkha-sukhaḥ svasthaḥ, sama loṣṭāśma kāmcanah). Possessed of wisdom, he receives the pleasant as well as unpleasant in the same spirit and views censure and praise alike (tulya-priyāyapriyo dhīras tulyanindātma samstutiḥ. XIV. 24). The Gītā thus preaches the doctrine of activity (yoga) with indifference and with an enlightened mind (buddhi) gifted with equipoise (samatvam. II. 48).

Knowledge and Devotion :

Knowledge is equally allied with devotion in the Gītā. The 'Song' speaks of devotion as the immediate and equally comprehensive way to final union with God. It says - 'Fix thy mind and devotion on Me ; worship Me and revere Me; Thou shall come to Me by thus disciplining thy soul in full devotion to Me' (man-manā bhava mad-bhakto, mad-yājī mām namaskuru ; mām evaiśyasi yuktī vaivam ātmānam mat parāyanah. IX. 34). Further, the Lord asks the devotee to fix his thought organ on Him alone, his

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in self, taking we and joy alike, taking a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold as equal in value (same-durkha-sukha). Possessed of wisdom, he receives the pleasant as well as unpleasant in the same spirit and views censure and praise alike (praisa-pratyakhyasv). XIV. 24. The Gita thus preaches the doctrine of activity (yoga) with indifference and with an enlightened mind (buddhi) allied with equanimity (ananyas). II. 48.

Knowledge and Devotion :

Knowledge is equally allied with devotion in the Gita. The 'Gang' speaks of devotion as the immediate and equally comprehensive way to final union with God. It says - 'I shall give and devotion to Me : worship Me and serve Me. Thou shalt come to Me by thus disciplining thy soul in full devotion to Me'. mad-mana bhava mad-bhakto, mad-velli mad namaskuru : nam evaishyasi. Further, the Lord yuktir vishvam atmanam mat parayanam. IX. 34. His

consciousness sunk in Him, and that would enable the votary to dwell even in Him thereafter without any doubt (mayy eva mana adhasva, mayi buddhim nivesaya ; nivasisyasi mayy eva ata urdhvam na sanśayah. XII. 8). The earlier verse ensures speedy deliverance from the ocean of birth and death, to those whose mind was fixed on Him (tesam aham samuddhartā mṛityu samsāra sāgarat. XII. 7). Even wicked men quickly attain righteousness which helps them to attain salvation through devotion to God. This applies to all without discrimination on grounds of caste or religion and no devotee of God is lost. (X. 30-32). Devotion to God has no doubt an important bearing on the question of action and the doctrine of karma. The devotee is expected to resign all actions to God in a spirit of loving devotion to Him. That would ensure freedom from the bonds of action with its fruits. 'Taking refuge in Me', says the Lord, 'and with the performance of all acts as enjoined by My grace, a man attains the eternal undying position.' 'They are in Me and I am in them' (ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktiā mayi te tesu cāpy aham. IX. 29). Further, 'to those ever-disciplined ones that revere Me lovingly, I grant the discipline of mind whereby they come unto Me' (tesam satata-yuktānam bhajatām prīti pūrvakam, dadāmi buddhā yogam tam yena mām upayānti. X. 10). Still more, in the very next verse, God grants the light of knowledge to the devotee. In His words again, 'to show compassion to these someones I, while remaining in My own true state, dispel their darkness that is born of ignorance by the shining light of knowledge (nāśayāmy ātma bhavāsthō jñāna dīpena bhāsvatā. X.11). The way of knowledge and the way of

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disciplined activity are allowed their proper places but the way of devotion excels them. In the words of the Gītā, 'the most perfectly disciplined man is he who is devoutly reveres Me, with his soul fixed on Me'. (śraddhāvan bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ. VI. 47). While the way of devotion is preferred, the validity of other ways is not questioned in the Gītā. The various ways appear to be blended with devotional colouring.

Body, Soul & God :

Two other aspects necessitating consideration are the relations between the body and the soul, and finally the nature of God, a personal one - theistic or an impersonal one - pantheistic. The Gītā speaks of the human soul as a part of God (māmaivāṁśo jīvaloke jīva bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ. XV. 7). It is the essential part of man that does not perish at death. In the opening part of the dialogue Lord Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna that he should not grieve for the soul because it is immortal and not subject to the sufferings of the body. These bodies come to an end, but the Embodied (Soul) in them is eternal indestructible and unfathomable. The self - dehin or śārīrin - the empirical or individual self, seen as distinct from the body it assumes, being a munīte art of God is eternal and in its inmost essence remains unaffected by the world process and karma (ātmanyeva ca santuṣṭas tasya kāryam na vidyate. III.17). That great soul has no use whatsoever for things done or not done (naiva tasya kriteṇārtho nākriteṇāha kaścana. III. 18). The soul is not born nor does he ever die, nor, having come to be, will he ever more cease to be ; unborn, eternal, ever-lasting from remote times, he is not slain when the body perishes.

disciplined activity are allowed their proper places but the way of devotion excels them. In the words of the Gita, 'the most perfectly disciplined man is he who is devotedly reverent to Me, with his soul fixed on Me'. (atadhyakṣaṁ bhaktiḥ ya madam me yuktaṁ madam. VI. 47). While the way of devotion is preferred, the validity of other ways is not questioned in the Gita. The various ways appear to be blended with devotional colouring.

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(na jayate mriyate vā kadācin nāyam bhūtvā bhavitā vā na bhīyah ;
ajo nityah śāsvato'yam purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre. II.20).

Swords cut him not, fire burns him not, water wets him not, wind dries him not. (naīham chindanti śastrāṇi, naīham dahati pavakah,
na c'āham kledyanty āpo, na śoṣayati mārutaḥ. II. 23).

Soul and Matter :

Elsewhere the soul is called 'the knower' of matter and this body is called the Field (Kshetra). He who knows it (i.e. the soul), him those who know the truth call the Field Knower (Ḳshetratjña). This word is used in the Śvetāśvara Upaniṣad (6.16) as an alternative word for the purusa, the spiritual nomad that indwells every human being. The individual 'self-in-itself' merely looks on and knows matter and its acts without any real connection with them. Actions are performed entirely by the strands (guṇas) of material nature. In any action, it is not the soul that acts but strands of matter (gunas) that act upon the strands (guṇā guṇesu vartanta iti matvā na sajjate. III. 28). And one who sees that acts are exclusively performed by material nature alone, and likewise that his soul does nothing, he truly sees (prakṛityāiva ca karmanī kriyamāṇāni sarvaśaḥ yah paśyati tathātmanāni akartārāṇi sa paśyati. XIII. 29). On the otherhand, he whose soul is deluded by the 'I' - faculty imagines that he is the doer. (prakṛiteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmanī sarvaśaḥ, ahaṁkāra-vimūḍhātma kartāham iti manyate. III. 27). According to the Lord when the Beholder (the soul) perceives that no other than the strands (of matter) act and knows that which is above the strands, he reaches My estate (nānyāni guṇebhyaḥ kartāram yadā dṛiṣṭānu-paśyati, guṇebhyaś ca param vetti madbhāvam so'dhi

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gacchati (XIV.19). And yet the soul residing in material nature enjoys the strands (guṇas) that are born of material nature. Its attachment to the strands is the reason for its various births in good and evil stations (of lives) (puruṣaḥ prakṛitiṣṭho hi bhūktā prakṛitjān guṇān kāraṇam guṇasaṅgō'sya sadasad yonijanmasu. XIII.21). Further more, the spirit (soul) dwelling in this body is really the same as the Supreme One. He is spoken of as the witness, the true Guide, the Sustainer of all, the Experiencer (as the embodied soul), the Overlord and the Absolute (Upadraṣṭā numantā ca bhartā bhoktā mahēśvaraḥ; parmātmēti ca'py ukto dehe'smin puruṣaḥ paraḥ. XIII. 22).

The Soul in Bondage :

The association of soul with matter is a bondage. The strands - sattva - goodness - rajas - activity with passion, and tamas - darkness involving evil and suffering; bind the soul in the body (sattvam, rajas, tama iti guṇāḥ prakṛiti sambhavaḥ, nibadhananti mahābāho dehe dehinam avayayam. XIV. 5). Sattva binds through identification with joy and wisdom (sukha-saṅgena jñānasangena ca. XIV. 6), the rajas through attachment to actions and fruit (karma saṅgena dehinam. XIV. 7) and the tamas - the deluder of all those who look upon the body as their own self, as born of ignorance, binds the soul through error, sloth and sleep (tamas tvajñānajanī viddhi mohanam sarva-dehinām, pramādalasya-nidrābhis tan nibadhanati. XIV. 8). When one attains true enlightenment, realizing the true nature of the soul and matter and their basic independence of each other, then through this perfect, mystic knowledge, he obtains release from bondage. His soul transcends matter and is finally freed from it for

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good, and equally freed from the chain of re-birth. The Embodied (soul) transcending these three strands of matter that spring from the body, freed from birth, death, old age and sorrow, attains immortality (gunān etān atītya triṣṭu dehī deha sambhavanī janma-mrityo jara-dukhair vimukto mritam āśnute. XIV. 20). In other words, the non-soul or material nature is something from which the soul should utterly detach itself, whether it really exists as propounded in the Gītā, and also in Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems, or is merely illusory as supposed by Śāṅkara, noted for his extreme idealistic Vedanta philosophy. He thinks of only One Brahman, the world soul with which the human soul is really identical. All else is illusion (māyā), appearing as a mirage and not in reality.

The Liberated Soul :

Further, what are we to conceive of the condition of the soul that has been liberated from earthly existence ? Does the soul having been part of the Divine Soul before its separation from it, lose its individuality on its return to its origin ? In other words, when liberated from earthly existence, is it attunedⁿ to God or the Supreme Divine ? It is answered in the negative. Deliverance is conceived as the state of blissful peace of the soul whose individual life continues in the presence of God. How indeed, on the assumption of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the soul can lead a conscious existence without entering into relation with matter ? On this point the Bhagavad Gītā does not provide any information, but it is clear from the Gītā that as 'the wind wafts scents from their retreats, so too the Jīvātma which is the controller of the body, taking the mind and the senses from

good, and equally freed from the chain of rebirth. The embodied (soul) transcending these three strands of matter that spring from the body, freed from birth, death, old age and sorrow, attains immortality (paramatma). This is the deha sampravartan-jarman-matya jar-jukar vimekya matya samuta XIV. 20. In other words, the non-soul or material nature is something from which the soul should utterly detach itself. Whether it really exists as propounded in the Gita, and also in Sankhya and Yoga systems, or is merely illusory as suggested by Sankara, noted in his extreme idealistic Vedantic philosophy. He thinks of only one Brahman, the world soul with which the human soul is really identical. All else is illusion (maya), appearing as a mirage and not in reality.

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the body which it leaves behind forthwith, migrates to the body it acquires (śarīram yad avāpnoti yac cāpy utkrāmatīśvarah grihivaitāni samyāti vāyur gandhān ivāsayāt. XV. 8). Earlier, the embodied soul is described as casting off worn out bodies and entering into new one, like a person shedding worn-out garments and taking other new ones (vāsamsi jīrnāni yathā vihāya navāni grihnāti naro'parāni, tathā śarīrāni vihāya jīrnāny anyāni samyāti navāni dehi. II. 22). In another context reference is made to the stock of merits acquired in one's life and their enjoyment in the extensive heaven - world. After exhausting the fruits of merit in that region they return to this world of mortals (te tam bhuktvā svarga lokam viśalam ksīne punye martya lokam viśanti. IX. 21).

Western Thinkers on the Soul :

This concept of soul and its association with the region beyond is equally stressed by ancient western philosophers. In the words of Cicero, the Greek thinker, 'When I reflect on the nature of the soul, it seems to me by far more difficult and obscure to determine its character while it is in the body, strangely docile, than to imagine what it is when it leaves it, and has arrived in the empirical region, its own and proper home'. Its importance is stressed by Plato who points out that 'of all things which a man has, next to the gods, his soul is the most divine and most truly his own'. The human soul is no more than a spark of the divine in us, which upon death returns to re-unite with God, as the original source of its being, than in the body. (Simon Greenberge). The best definition of soul is provided by St. Augustine. It

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is 'the life whereby we are joined into the body'. He as well refers to God not only as the creator, but also the country of the soul. Among all the things He created, nothing is nearer to God than Soul. The soul is a partaker of the eternity of God and can never cease to be (William Law). It is truly an image of the infinity of God and no words can do justice to its grandeur. Ralph Emerson, the famous essayist of the 19th century, finds it difficult to describe the natural history of the soul, but we know that it is divine. In fact, 'the soul of man is the lamp of God'. Voltaire in his 'Philosophical Disctionary' points out that 'four thousand volumes of metaphysics will not teach us what the soul is.'

Soul - the spark of the Divine :

Thus, there is not much of difference in the eastern and western concept of soul - both taking it as the spark of the Divine, living in this body without actively involving itself in the actions of the people which are born out of the eternal strands (gunas), associated with the person. The soul lodged in the body ~~in~~ does not die with it but takes another body in accordance with the past records of the person. There is constant striving, with the spiritual insight of the previous birth being carried on to the next one till perfection is attained in the form of God Realization. (tatra tam buddhi-samyogam labhate paurva dehikam, yatate ca tato bhūyah samsiddhau kurunandana. VI. 43). The Yogi who diligently takes up the practice attains perfection in this very life with the help of latencies of many births, and being thoroughly purged of sins forthwith reaches the supreme state. (prayatnād yatamānas tu

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Soul - The Unity of the Divine :

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yogi samsuddha-kilbisah, anekajanma samsiddhas tato yati param gatim. VI. 45).

Soul - the organ of Integration :

In the final analysis, soul as the organ of integration - seeing the self in the self and finding content therein. (ātma-nātmanam paśyann ātmani tasyati. VI. 20), it brings the whole human personality into subjection to the self. It spiritualizes matter and serves as the bridge between spirit and matter. It is like the sacrificial fire which is supposed to be ^{the} mouth of Brahman and serves as the bridge between Brahman as the sacrifice and Brahman understood as timeless being.

Summing up, the soul and body are clearly distinguished. The body includes the psychic elements. The material composing it is subject to evolution, devolution and change of all kinds. It is a blend of various elements or qualities. On the other hand, the soul is immaterial, uniform, unchangeable, devoid of qualities and inactive. All action ~~a~~ is performed by the material body in relation to other material bodies or substance. The soul, as such, is unaffected by bodily action, nor is it influenced by any one outside of itself. It has only contemplative powers. It is, therefore, wrong to confine body and soul or imagine that souls act and suffer. The enlightened person realizes the distinction between the two and when his soul is freed from the bondage of connection with the body it reverts back to its origin.

The theistic personal God :

In this context the question of the identity of theistic personal god with the impersonal Brahman demands consideration.

VI. 45) . . .

Soul - the organ of information :

In the final analysis, soul as the organ of information seeing the self in the self and finding content therein. It is the human personality into subjection to the self. It spiritualizes matter and serves as the bridge between spirit and matter. It is like the sacrificial fire which is supposed to be mouth of Brahman and serves as the bridge between Brahman as the sacrifice and Brahman understood as timeless being.

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The theistic personal God :

In this context the question of the identity of theistic personal God . . .

Both occur in the Gītā, sometimes as identical and at others the latter as a subordinate position. The theists take their personal deity as God who controls all their senses, and even-minded towards all, and devoted to the welfare of all beings. At the same time those constantly adoring as their very self the unthinkable, omnipresent, indestructable, indefinable, eternal, immovable and changeless Brahman, as well come to Me. (ye tv aksaram anirdeśyam avyaktam parupāsate, sarvatragam acintyam ca kūtastham acalam dhruvam. samniyamendriya grāmam sarvatra sama buddhayaḥ, te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva bhūta hite rataḥ. XII. 3-4). Firmly identified with Brahman— who is Truth, consciousness and Bliss integrated, and cheerful in mind, the Sāṅkhya Yogi neither grieves nor craves for anything. Such a yogi, being the same to all beings, attains supreme devotion to Me. (brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātma na śocati na kāṅkṣati, samah sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad bhaktim labhate param. XVIII. 54). It is through that supreme devotion that the Yogi comes to know Me in reality, says the Lord. Realizing My greatness and knowing Me in essence he forthwith enters into My being (bhaktiā mām abhijānati yāvān yas' cāsmi tattvataḥ, tato mām tattvato jñātvā viśate tad anantaram. XVIII. 55). The position of God in relation to the material spirit which is perishable and the soul, the imperishable and unchangeable, is one of supreme spirit, called the Highest Soul (Paramātmā). The Eternal Lord enters into the three worlds and supports them. (uttamah puruṣas tv anyah paramatmeyo udāhṛtaḥ, yo loka trayam āviśya bibharti avyaya īśvaraḥ. XV. 17). He is equally described as the Field-Knower (kṣetrajña) in all Fields (Kṣetra. XIII.2). God is something other than either material nature or the individual souls of men. He is

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of course regarded as imminent or existing in them (sarvabhūta-sṭhitam) and all beings in the self (sarvabhūtāni cātmani. VI.29). In the words of the Lord, 'such a Yogi never loses sight of Me and I never ignore him' (tasyāham na pranasyāmi sa ca me na pranasyati. VI. 60). In its essence the Gita preaches monism or on God. The Lord points out that 'there is nothing else that is higher than Me'. (mattah parataram nānyat kincid asti). On Me all this is strung like necklaces of pearls on a string' (mayi sarvam idam protam sūtre maṇi gaṇā iva. VII. 7). Further 'God', in the words of the Gita, 'is the seed of all beings' (sarva-bhūtānām bījam) and there is nothing moving or stationary that is without Him (na tad asti vinā yat syān mayā bhūtam carācaram) (X. 39). The Lord describes Himself as 'taste in water' (raso'ham apsu), the light in the moon and sun (prabhāsnī śāsisūrayah), the sacred symbol Om in all the Vedas (pranava sarvavedeṣu), sound in ether manliness in men (śabdah khe pauruṣam nrīṣu), the godly order in earth (pūnyo gandah prithivīyam) and the brilliance in fire (tesāmi vibhavasū. VII. 9), the eternal seed of all beings (bojan mam sarvabhutanam), the intelligence of the intelligent (bodhdhir buddhmatam asmi) and the glory of the glorious (tejas tejasvi'nam aham. VII. 10). The God abides in the heart of all creatures making them revolve by his illusive power as if mounted on a machine (isvarah sarva bhutanam hriddese 'rjuna tisthati, bhramayan sarva bhutani yantrarudhani mayaya. XVIII. 61).

The God as Purushottama :

The Purushottama as He is called (prathitah purusottamah) the Supreme Person, having entered all the three worlds, upholds

of course regarded as identical or related to them (sambhava-
 bhava) and all beings in the self (sarvasamabhava). VI. 10.
 in the words of the Lord, 'such a You never loses sight of
 me and I never ignore him (sarvasamabhava)'. VI. 10.
 In his essence the Uta presides over the
 God. The Lord points out that there is nothing else that is
 higher than he. (sarvasamabhava) VI. 10.
 All this is strung like necklaces of pearls on a string (sarvasamabhava).
 sarvasamabhava VI. 10. Further, God,
 in the words of the Uta, 'the seed of all beings (sarvasamabhava)'.
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 power as if mounted on a machine (sarvasamabhava).
 sarvasamabhava VII. 1.

The God as Purushottama :

The Purushottama as he is called (sarvasamabhava).
 the Supreme Person, having entered all the three worlds, upholds

and maintains all (uttamah purusas tv anyah paramātmēty udāhṛtah
yo loka trayam āviśya bibharty avyaya īśvarah.) He is spoken
of as the imperishable Lord, supreme spirit (īśvarah. XV. 17).
Further, as Purusottama in the world as well as in the Vedas
he is described as 'beyond the perishable world of matter or
ksetra and superior even to the imperishable soul (akṣarād api
cōttamah ato'smi loke vede ca prathitah purusottamah. XV. 18).
God is repeatedly called the Creator, Supporter, Ruler of all
that exists, the origin and dissolution of the Universe. (aham
krtsnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayas tathā. VII. 6). The mani-
festations of God are comprehensive and in the universe include
good as well as the evil sides of things. 'Whatever states of
being there are, whether of the nature of goodness, passion or
darkness symbolising the three gunas or strands of matter ;
they all emanates from Him alone' (ye cāiva sātṭvika bhavā
rajasās tāmasās ca ye matta evēti tān viddhi. VII. 12). But in
reality in the words of the Lord, 'neither do I exist in them,
nor they in Me (na tv aham tesu te mayi - *ibid*).

The Infinite - Greatness of God :

The infinite greatness of God is especially stressed
in the 'Vibhūtiyoga' (Chapter X) as also in several others.
God is considered as a Conscious, Eternal and Almighty Being,
the 'great Lord of the Universe, who is without beginning'.
(ajam ānādim ca vetti loka-mahesvaram. X. 3). He is distinct
not only from the perishable world, but also from the imperishable
soul of existing beings (ksaram atito'ham akṣarād api cottamah.
XVI. 18). God has two natures, the higher spiritual nature by
which the universe is sustained, and the second, a lower and

and maintains all (Vishnu Purana IV. 10). He is spoken of as the imperishable Lord, supreme spirit (Vishnu Purana IV. 10). Further, as Purushottama in the world as well as in the Vedas he is described as 'beyond the perishable world of matter or kasha and superior even to the imperishable soul (Atman and Cognition etc.)' (Vishnu Purana IV. 10). God is repeatedly called the Creator, Sustainer, Ruler of all that exists, the origin and dissolution of the Universe. (Shan Kirtana, Vishnu Purana, Brahma Samhita, VII. 6). The manifestations of God are comprehensive and in the universe include good as well as the evil sides of things. 'Whatever states of being there are, whether of the nature of goodness, passion or darkness symbolising the three modes or strands of matter: they all emanate from Him alone' (Vishnu Purana IV. 10). But in reality in the words of the Lord, 'neither do I exist in them, nor they in Me (na tv aham teo na mayi - 101d).

The Infinite - Greatness of God :

The infinite greatness of God is especially stressed in the 'Vishnu Purana' (Chapter X) as also in several others. God is considered as a Conscious, Eternal and Almighty Being, the 'great Lord of the Universe, who is without beginning'. (Vishnu Purana X. 2). He is distinct not only from the perishable world, but also from the imperishable soul of existing beings (Kasha Atman and Cognition etc.). God has two natures, the higher spiritual nature by which the universe is sustained, and the second, a lower and

material nature consisting of prakriti or matter, which is under the control of God for its evolution as also of devolution. God deposits in matter the germ from which development takes place (XV. 3-4 Op.cit). He as well supervises the rise, development and decay of the universe (sarva bhūtāni kaunteya prakritim yānti māmikām, kalpa kṣaye punas tāni kalpādaṁ visṛjāmy aham. (IX. 7). Prakriti is described as the mother's womb (mahā yonir) with the Lord as the seed-giving Father (aham bija pradah pita). God is described as the origin and end of the whole world (aham kṛtsnasya jagatah pralayas tatha. VII. 6) ; cf. X.8). He is also identified with death (Kaḷosmi X. 32). He is as well responsible for creating all the creatures, their doings and conditions of life (X. 4-5). He determines their fate and accords places to them according to their deeds. In the circle of life, He makes the creatures, revolve like figures in a puppet-show (bhṛāmayan sarva bhūtāni yantrarūddhāni māyayā. XVIII. 61). The Lord acts solely for the sake of the universe since He has no aspiration and no goal to attain (na me pārthaṣṭi kartavyam trisu lokeṣu kimcana, naṇāvaptam avāptavyam vartā eva ca karmāni. III. 22). If he ceases to act, these world would perish, and he would be the cause of confusion and destruction of the people (na kuryām karma ced aham saṅkarasya ca kartā syām upahanyām imah prajāḥ. III. 24). He as well re-creates Himself assuming new phenomenal forms 'whenever justice declines and injustice increases' for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil, in order to set up a righteous social order (IV. 7-8). (yadā-yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyutthānam adharmasya tadātmanam srijāmyaham ; paritrāṇaya sādḥūnam viṇāśaya ca duṣkṛitām, dharma samsthāpanārthaya sambhavāmi

material nature consisting of prakriti or matter which is under the control of God for the evolution as also of devolution. God deposits in matter the germ from which development takes place (XV. 1-2). He as well supervises the process of development and decay of the universe (sarva bhūta kārta). prakriti is described as the mother's womb (mātrā yoni) with the Lord as the seed-giving father (bīja pradaḥ pitā). God is described as the origin and end of the whole world (śarva bhūta kārta). prakriti is also identified with death (kāla). He is as well responsible for creating all the creatures, their colour and conditions of life (X. 4-5). He determines their fate and accords release to them according to their deeds. In the circle of life, He makes the creatures revolve like figures in a puppet-show (prapañca). The Lord acts solely for the sake of the universe since He has no aspiration and no goal to attain (X. 6). prakriti is the cause of evolution and destruction of the people (jāta). He as well re-creates himself assuming new phenomenal forms whenever justice declines and injustice increases for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil, in order to set up a righteous social order (IV. 7-8). (Yadā yadā hi dharmaso dhātā bhavati...)

yuge yuge. IV. 7-8). As the ruler of matter and His action devoid of a selfish motive (na karma phale spriha), He is unfettered by His action (na mām karmāni limpanti. IV. 14 ; cf. na ca etaṁ karmāni nibadhnanti. IX. 9).

God and Mankind :

God in relation to the world of mankind is won by those who know Him and are completely devoted to Him. This is stressed in several verses and at many places (teṣāṁ jñāni nitya yuktah eka bhaktir viśisyate, priyo'hi jñānino'tyartham ahaṁ sa ca mām priyah. VII. 17). cf. XII. 14-20 ; XVIII. 64, 65, 69). Those taking refuge in Him are assured of deliverance from all sins, as the Lord enjoins Arjuna to comply with His Command (sarva dharmān parityajya, mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja, ahaṁ tvā sarva pāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucah. XVIII. 66). The God knows all beings that have been, that are, and that shall be, but no knows Him (vedāhaṁ samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna, bhaviṣyāni ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kas'cana, VII. 26). None but God knows Himself, for neither gods nor demons know Thy manifestation, says Arjuna 'Thou Thyself alone knowest Thyself by Thyself, O Supreme Spirit, Cause of beings, Lord of beings, God of Gods, Lord of the World (na hi te bhagavān vyaktim vidur devā na daṇavah ; svayam evātmanātmānam vettha tvam puruṣottama, bhūta bhāvana bhuteśa deva deva jagat pate. X.14-15). The climax is reached in the famous eleventh chapter entitled Viśvadvāraṇa Yoga in which He reveals His mystic vision after providing Arjuna a supernatural power of sight. This is done only by a pure act of God's grace and no amount of pious rites and performances can win it. In fact, this Supreme form of

the Lord in His words has not been seen before by any other than thee (Arjuna) (tvadanyena nādrīṣṭā pūrvāni). Further, not by the Veda, by sacrifice or study, nor by alms-giving or rites or severe penance, can I be seen in this form by any other than thee in the world of men. (na veda yajñādhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ, evāṃ rūpāḥ śākya ahaṁ nriloke draṣṭuṁ tvad anyena kuru-pravīra. XI. 48).

The Gita - more religious than philosophical :

The Gītā is in fact more religious than philosophical. It takes individual soul as a part from the Divine Soul (māmai-vāṁśo jīva loke - XV.7 ; cf. also mām ātma para deheṣu. XVI. 18 ; and mām caivāntaḥ śarīra sthām. XVII. 6). The matter with which it is united is incapable of making any change in it. It is imperative for the man to behave in such a way that his soul may be able to return again to its origin, namely to God. That is Salvation (mokṣa). In this context two ways are proposed in the Gītā - one of which consists in withdrawal from the life of the world, and seeking after knowledge ; the other in acts conforming to one's duty in life and free from desire as also not craving for the fruits. The second path is repeatedly described as superior (karma jyāyo 'hyakarmanah. III. 8). The Gītā recognizes the right to work only, but never to the fruit (karmany'evādhikāraṣṭe mā phalesu kadācana. II. 47). This appears to be the true ethical ideal of the 'Song Celestial', yet the way of salvation by renunciation of world and abstract knowledge is not rejected. In fact, the concept of deliverance from the cycle of existence through meditation in complete isolation from the world has been equally focussed in the Gītā. The Yogi whose mind is satiated with knowledge through books of a theoretical

the Lord in his words has not been seen before by any other
 than those (Atithya) (Ishavasya Upanishad). Further,
 not by the Veda, by sacrifice or study, nor by abstaining or
 rites or severe penance, can I be seen in this form by any other
 than thee in the world of men. (The Veda vedavyavaharika na vidyate
 na ca krivachit na vedoparita vidyate. even such laws were not
 created by any one kuruvachit. XI. 48).

The Gita - more religious than philosophical :

The Gita is in fact more religious than philosophical.
 It takes individual soul as a part from the Divine Soul (Parama
 Atma) (I. 27) : it also says that (I. 27) : it is
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 of existence through meditation in complete isolation from the
 world has been equally focussed in the Gita. The Yogi whose

nature (jñāna) and wisdom learnt from life and experience (viññāna), who is unmoved in all circumstances, with his senses completely controlled, and to whom earth, stone and gold are alike, is spoken of as a God-realized soul (jñāna-viññāna triptātma kūtastho vijitendriyah, yukta'ity ucyate yogī samalostaśmakāncaṇaḥ. VI. 8). The Bhagavad-Gītā reconciles the two views by explaining that action in fulfilment of duty which is performed disinterestedly is equivalent to the abstinence from action by way of knowledge. What is ordained in consonance with one's situation in life must be done without passion and with quietness and equanimity, for the welfare of all (lokasaṅgraha). The yukta or the endowed person, controlled by his wisdom, esteems indifferently the pleasure and pain, good or evil fortune without any desire or personal interest. He is not to vex himself with regard to transitory material gains. Following the precepts of duty and the Divine example (III. 22) leaving to God the outcome of all his works, he has nothing to worry about the outcome of his efforts in life.

Ethical Ideals and Rituals :

In sharp contrast to the ethical ideals of the Gītā, stand the ceremonies of rituals which are described as couched in flowering language (puṣpītamvācām) meant for the attainment of pleasure and power with rebirth as their fruit (kāmātmanah svarga-parā janmakarmaphala-pradām- II. 43). Those whose minds are carried away by such words, and who are deeply attached to pleasure and worldly power cannot attain the determinate intellect concentrated on God. (bhogaśvāryaprasaktāṇām tayāpahrtacetasām vyavaśayātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhiyate. II. 44). Indifference towards the prescriptions of the Vedic ritual is taken as a

nature (Janas) and wisdom learnt from life and experience (Vijñana), who is unmoved in all circumstances, with his senses completely controlled, and to whom earth, stone and gold are alike, is spoken of as a God-realized soul (Janas-vijñana). Janas-vijñana is the state of the soul when it is completely controlled by the two views by explaining that action in fulfillment of duty which is performed disinterestedly is equivalent to the attainment of knowledge. What is obtained in consequence with one's situation in life must be done without passion and with purity and equanimity, for the welfare of all (Janas-vijñana). The Yoga or the endowed person, controlled by his wisdom, esteems indifferently the pleasure and pain, good or evil fortune without any desire or personal interest. He is not to vex himself with regard to transitory material gains. Following the precepts of duty and the Divine example (III. 22) leaving to God the outcome of all his works, he has nothing to worry about the outcome of his efforts in life.

Ethical Ideals and Rituals :

In sharp contrast to the ethical ideals of the Gita, stand the ceremonies of rituals which are described as couched in flowering language (puṣpitoṣaṇa) meant for the attainment of pleasure and power with selfish as their goal (Kāṁsāna). Janas-vijñana is the state of the soul when it is completely controlled by the two views by explaining that action in fulfillment of duty which is performed disinterestedly is equivalent to the attainment of knowledge. What is obtained in consequence with one's situation in life must be done without passion and with purity and equanimity, for the welfare of all (Janas-vijñana). The Yoga or the endowed person, controlled by his wisdom, esteems indifferently the pleasure and pain, good or evil fortune without any desire or personal interest. He is not to vex himself with regard to transitory material gains. Following the precepts of duty and the Divine example (III. 22) leaving to God the outcome of all his works, he has nothing to worry about the outcome of his efforts in life.

sin qua non for the attainment of salvation. (II. 52-53). On the other hand, in the words of the Lord, wise men possessing an equipped mind, (manīṣinā karmajanām buddhiyuktā) renouncing the fruit of action (phalāni tyaktvā) and freed from the shackles of birth (janma-bandha vinirmuktāḥ) attain the blissful supreme state (padam gacchanty anāmayaṃ. II. 51).

The role of the Gunas or strands :

Any hindrance due to natural disposition must be overcome irrespective of the situation in which a person is placed or due to his natural disposition. (gunaiḥ karmāni sarvaśaḥ. II. 27). The Gītā refers to men who are born to a god-like existence (sāttavikā) and those born to the existence of demons (tāmasikā). This predetermination is conceived as an effect of previous merit or guilt. The removal of hindrance in the path to deliverance is possible with the attainment of knowledge, where it is enveloped in ignorance. The person is simply deluded by egoism. (ahāṅkāra-vimūdhātma). He thinks that he is the doer (kārtaham iti manyate. III. 27). It is however left to man's option to content himself with the situation in which he is mentally poised or strive for a higher goal in life with the effacement of that sense of egoism and delusion, and commit sin even involuntarily as though driven by force. (anicchannapi vārsneya balād iva niyojitaḥ. III. 36).

Knowledge, Desire and Scepticism :

According to the Gītā, knowledge is covered by desire (avritam jñānam etena kamarūpena), The eternal enemy of the wise (jñānino nitya vairinaḥ) and it is insatiable like fire. (duṣpūreṇānalena ca. III. 39). So also unbelief and scepticism

and due not for the attainment of salvation. (II. 30-32). In the other hand, in the words of the Lord, wise men possessing an equipped mind, (manishā karmāṇāṁ pūṇāyuktā) transcending the fruit of action (phalāya tyaktā) and freed from the shackles of birth (jāma-bandha vimuktā) attain the blissful supreme state (śāntam ānandam āpnotya). II. 31.

The role of the Guna or strands :

Any hindrance due to natural disposition must be overcome irrespective of the situation in which a person is placed or due to his natural disposition. (guṇāḥ karmāṇāṁ sanyasāḥ. II. 37). The Gita refers to men who are born to a god-like existence (sattvikā) and those born to the existence of demons (tāmasikā). This predetermination is conceived as an effect of previous merit or guilt. The removal of hindrance is the path to deliverance as possible with the attainment of knowledge, where it is enveloped in ignorance. The person is already deluded by egoism (ābhāsa-vimūḍhatā). He thinks that he is the doer (kartā). III. 27. It is however left to man's option to content himself with the situation in which he is mentally poised or strive for a higher goal in life with the effacement of that sense of egoism and delusion, and so will also even involuntarily as though driven by force. (apicchannāpi yatsmṛda gataḥ yaḥ. III. 35).

Knowledge, desire and scepticism :

According to the Gita, knowledge is covered by desire (kāma jñānam eṣa karmabandha). The eternal enemy of the wise (jñānaṁ hiya valina) and it is inextinguishable like fire. (dusprasaṅgaḥ. III. 36).

are fatal. He who lacks discrimination is devoid of faith (ajñānāś ca-asraddā-dhanas ca) while his soul at the same time full of doubt perishes (samsayatma vinasyati). Such a person has no bliss in this world, nor in the next (nā yam loko'sti na paro na śukham saṁśayātmanah. IV. 40).

Moderate asceticism :

The Gita as well recommends moderate ascetic (yoga) practices as aids for success fully combating hindrance to self-realization. In the words of the Lord, 'he who has brought his senses, mind and intellect under control, such a contemplative soul intent on liberation and free from desire, fear and anger, becomes one with Brahma (yatendriyamanobuddhir munir moksapaṛāyanah vigatecchābhayakrodho yah śada mukta eva sah. V. 28). Even for a person of unsuccessful mental abstraction, the observance of yoga are not valueless or unrewarding. Such a person will be reborn under favourable conditions and will finally reach the supreme goal of self-realization and immunity from the fear of birth and death (ne'ha'bhikrama'nāso'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate. II. 40).

Theism and God Realization :

The relation of God to human salvation is no doubt theistic, and the various schemes of salvation, largely inherited from the speculations of the Upaniṣads are reinterpreted in the Gītā in terms of personal devotion to the Lord. Whosoever knows the mystic truth of God's nature is freed from rebirth and is immersed in God (janma karma ca me divyam evam yo vetti tattavatah tyaktvā deham punarjanma naiḥti-mām eti. IV. 9(; cf. VII. 19 ; X. 3 ; XIV. 1 ff). Many of the expressions used to describe

are fatal. The who lacks discrimination is devoid of faith.
 (Samskara-samudhaya-chakra 22) While it is said at the same time
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Union and God Realization :

The relation of God to human salvation is no doubt
 theistic, and the various schemes of salvation, largely inherited
 from the speculations of the Upanishads are reinterpreted in the
 light of personal devotion to the Lord. Whoever knows
 the mystic truth of God's nature is freed from rebirth and is
 united in God (Samskara-samudhaya-chakra 22). (IV. 40).

That One - the Supreme and Ultimate Spirit - are applied to the Personal God in the Gītā. In the Vibhūtiyoga (Chapter X), the God is described as the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Light, the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal Puruṣa, the Divine, the Principal God, the Unborn Lord (param brahma parama dharma pavitram paramam bhavān, puruṣam śāśvatam divyam ādidevam ajam vibhum. X.12). The God is equally described in another context, as the ancient Seer (kavimpurānam), the governor (anūsāsītāram), finer than an atom (anor anīyāṃsam), the Establisher of all (sarvasya dhātāram), of unthinkable form (acintya rūpam), sun-coloured (āditya varnam), beyond darkness (tamasah parastāt) (VIII. 9). As reported earlier, the Lord calls himself 'the father of the world, the mother, the establisher, the ancestor (pitā'ham asyajagato, mātā dhātā pitāmaha), the object of knowledge (vedyam), the purifier (pavitram), the sacred syllable OM (Omkāra), the verse of praise, the chant and the sacrificial formula (rik sāma yajur eva ca. IX. 17).

The term Brahman & theistic God :

The term 'Brahman' of the Upanisads is also noticed in the Gītā in several references. Brahma is symbolised as Impersonal, the Imperishable and the Unmanifest. In the Chapter entitled 'Aksara Brahma' Yoga (VIII), Arjuna requests the Lord to define Brahma along with 'Adhibhūta' and 'Karma'. The Lord calls Brahma the supreme Indestructible (aksaram Brahma. VIII. 3). As regards the identity of the Upanishadic Brahma with the theistic God it might be pointed out that the notion of the Impersonal Abstract is finally absorbed in the personal God of the theistic Gītā. The 'Song' does not as a rule make distinction

that One - the Supreme and ultimate Spirit - are applied to the Personal God in the Upanishads. In the Upanishads (Chapter I) the God is described as the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Light, the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal Purifier, the Divine, the Principal God, the Supreme Lord (Param Purusha Paramatma paramahansa parama bhava). The God is equally described in another context as the ancient Seer (Kavimurman), the governor (samakshin), finer than an atom (anu samaksha), the Establisher of all (sarvavyakhyasak), of unthinkable form (achintya rupa), son-coloured (chaitanya yogan), beyond darkness (kanakam bhaskar). As reported earlier, the Lord calls himself 'the Father of the world, the mother, the establisher, the ancestor' (pita matar yata yata mata dhatu bhishag), the object of knowledge (vedyan), the purifier (pavitan), the sacred syllable (Om), the voice of praise, the chant and the sacrificial formula (rit sam vidur ya ag. IX. 17).

The term Brahman & theistic God :

The term 'Brahman' of the Upanishads is also related to the Upanishads in several references. Brahman is explained as impersonal, the Imperishable and the Unmanifest. In the Chapter entitled 'Akasa Brahman' Yoga (VIII), Arjuna requests the Lord to define Brahman along with 'Adhishhta' and 'Arjuna'. The Lord calls Brahman the supreme Indestructible (aksharam Brahman. VII. 2) and regards the identity of the Upanishadic Brahman with the theistic God it might be pointed out that the notion of the impersonal Abstract is finally absorbed in the personal God of the Upanishads.

between the two, but in one or two places it does bring out a possible difference of opinion as to whether the Supreme is Personal or Impersonal. Since both the paths concentrating on the Impersonal and on unflinching devotion to One's god are supposed to lead to salvation. The best form of discipline, according to the Blessed One, is described in Chapter XII. 1-5). Those who fix their minds upon Me and worship Me with constant discipline and supreme faith and devotion are the best (mayy-āveśya mano ye mām nitya yukta upāsate śraddhayā parayopetās - te me yuktatamā mataḥ (XII. 2). The abstract, impersonal, absolute of the Upanisad's discipline demanding complete restraint of all senses and keeping the mind indifferent in all circumstances, and for the welfare of all (sarvabhūta hite rataḥ) as well helps in reaching Him. As the next verse (XII. 5) shows the strain is greater for those who have their mind attached to the unmanifest (klesā 'dhikataras teṣām avyaktasakta cetasām). The Gītā thus provides a simple and easier way to salvation without ruling out the possibility of intellectuals achieving it through the more arduous and exacting abstract path involving great mental exertion. As such, for an ordinary person worshipping a Personal God is preferable and easier than fixing his attention on an Impersonal Absolute.

The Impersonal Brahman :

At another place the impersonal Brahman is accorded a position subordinate to the personal God. At the end of the Chapter XIV. called 'Guṇātraya Vibhāga Yoga' - 'Discipline of Distinction of the three strands', the Lord calls himself the foundation of Brahman (brahmano hi pratisthā 'ham). The Impersonal Brahman



between the two, but in one or two places it does bring out a possible difference of opinion as to whether the Supreme is personal or impersonal. Since both the paths concentrating on the impersonal and on unflinching devotion to God's God are supposed to lead to salvation. The best form of discipline according to the Blessed One, is described in Chapter XII. 1-5. Those who fix their minds upon Me and worship Me with constant discipline and supreme faith and devotion are the best (parvati) parvati namo ya nam nitya yata upasate brahmanam paramam in the Yogakanda (XII. 2). The abstract, impersonal, absolute of the Upanishads, a discipline demanding complete renunciation of all senses and keeping the mind indifferent in all circumstances and for the welfare of all (sarvasvabhava hite tatva) as well helps in reaching Him. As the next verse (XII. 7) shows the strain is greater for those who have their mind attached to the unattainable (klesa 'bhikshavo klesa avyaktasakto bhava'). The Upanishads thus provides a simple and easier way to salvation without ruling out the possibility of intellectuals achieving it through the more arduous and exacting abstract path involving great mental exertion. As such, for an ordinary person worshipping a personal God is preferable and easier than fixing his attention on an Impersonal Absolute.

The Impersonal Brahman :

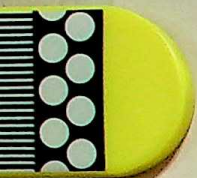
At another place the Impersonal Brahman is accorded a position subordinate to the personal God. At the end of the Chapter called 'Antaryama Vipada Yoga' - 'discipline of Distinction of the three strands', the Lord calls himself the foundation of the Impersonal Brahman.

is granted all the dignity accorded to it in the Upaniṣads, subject however to its dependence on the personal God. In the Ākṣetra-kṣetrajñā vibhāgyo nāma trayodaśo - Discipline of Distinction of Field and Field Knower, it is said by the Lord that 'I (God) am the Field Knower in all Fields'. (kṣetrajñā ca'pi mām viddhi sarva kṣetresu. XIII. 2). In another context the Lord refers to the eternal world the unmanifest one, the highest goal from where there is no return and that is 'His Supreme station or light'. The supreme spirit is to be attained by single devotion (VIII. 20-22), within it all beings rest ; by it this universe is pervaded. Those who are only devoted to Me pass beyond this delusion (māyāni etāni taranti te. VII. 14). The universal soul or God as well as the individual soul, the part of the former (māma-ekāṁśa) differ from material nature or body. 'All beings pass into My material nature at the end of an eon, and at the beginning of the next one I send them forth again and again. With Me as overseer, material nature creates the world of moving and unmoving thing (cara-acara). In this way the world revolves (IX. 10) (mayādhyaṁsena prakṛitah sūyate sa carācaram). The Supreme Soul higher than all else does not perish when all others do at the end of an eon (yah sa sarveṣu bhūteṣu naśyatsu na vinaśyati. VIII. 20). The Supreme Soul or God plants the germ in the womb of nature and from this all beings are born. Here instead of 'prakṛiti', the word 'Brahman' is used. 'The mighty Brahma is my womb', says the Lord, 'therein I place the living germ and from this comes the birth of all beings that exist'. (māmyonir mahad brahma tasmin garbham dadhāmy aham - sambhavah sarvabhūtānām tato bhavati. XIV.3). The Lord repeats again - 'I am the father furnishing the seed

(sarva yonisu kaunteya mūrtayah sambhavanti yah, teṣāṃ bīja pradah pitā. XIV. 4). The Gītā in its stress on the theistic Personal God, is said to have deflated the position of the Absolute Brahma, being absorbed into God or placed in some sort of subordinate position to Him. At time the earlier status of Brahman, the absolute, Co-eval with God is retained. 'Castings (all) actions upon Brahman, whose acts abandoning attachment, evil does not cleave to him as water (does not cleave) to a lotus-leaf (brahmany ādhāya karmāṇi sangam tyaktvā karoti yah, lipyate na sa pāpena padma-pātram ivāmbhasa (V. 10).

God-Incarnate :

God by the exercise of his 'mysterious power' (māyā) assumes personal existence as an individual in the world of beings (prakritim svām ādhisthāya sambhavamātmā māyaya (IV.6). The cardinal doctrine of the Gītā, of course, is the incarnation of God in human form again and again to accomplish His mission. 'For whenever right languishes and unrighteousness flourishes (yadā yadā hi dharmasya glāṇir bhavati), then I send Myself forth. To save the righteous, to destroy the wicked, to establish the right, I come into being age after age' (abhyōthānam adharmasya tadātmānam srijāmyaham. IV. 7). In another context the Lord says that 'Fools despise me when I dwell in human form.' (avajānānti mām mūḍhā mānuṣim tanum āśritam. IX. 11). Not knowing the higher state of Me, which is the great lord of beings (param bhāvām ajānanto mama bhūta maheśvaram - ibid). In this context the Gītā as well mentions that God does not appear as an incarnate figure in His true, Celestial form. That form is not visible to the eye of man or even of the 'gods' as such. He knows all beings that have been in the past, exist



(Sanskrit text, likely a chapter heading or introductory verse, written in Devanagari script. The text is somewhat faded and appears to be a mix of Sanskrit and Hindi characters.)

Job-Introduction :

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in the present and to come in future, but no one knows Me', says the Lord. (Vedāham samatītāni vartamānāni cārjuna, bhaviṣyāni ca bhūtāni mām tu veda na kaścana - VII. 26). He is also the starting point of the gods and the great seers altogether (aham adir hi devānam maharṣinām ca sarvaśah - X.2), and neither gods nor the great sages know the secret of His birth (na me viduḥ sura gaṇāḥ prabhavaṁ na maharṣayah - ibid). Exception is no doubt made in the case of Arjuna, the first and the last to see His mystic and mysterious power and form. 'I in My grace have shown thee. Arjuna, this Supreme form of Mine', says the Lord in the Eleventh (Viśva darsāna) Chapter. 'This was done through My own power of Yoga, this Supreme, effulgent, primal and infinite Cosmic Body, which was never seen before by any one other than you' (maya prasannena tavārjunedaṁ rūpaṁ param darsitam ātma yogāt, tejomayaṁ viśvaṁ ananataṁ ādyam yaṁ me tvādanyena na drṣṭa pūrvaṁ. XI. 47). Further, this privilege is not accorded to any one. Not by the Vedas, or rites by sacrifices or study, nor by alms giving or rites of severe penance, can I be seen in this form by any other thee in the world of men. (na veda yajñadhyayanair na dānair na ca kriyābhir na tapobhir ugraiḥ evaṁ rūpaḥ śakya ahaṁ nriloke draṣṭuṁ tvad anyena kuru-pravīra - XI. 48).

A widely accepted theory of Incarnation :

The theory of incarnation seems to have been widely accepted by scholars in the west. In the words of an author, 'the incarnation is the centre of all save theology - man at his best can alone give us God at his best (Gordar). Pope Louis XIII as well pointed out, 'among the external operations of God, the highest of all is the mystery of the Incarnation of the world

in which the splendour of the divine perfections shines forth so brightly that nothing more sublime can even be imagined, nothing else could have been more salutary to the human race.' The doctrine of a loving God born upon earth to save the world and its people from the onslaught of the evil doers is definitely appealing to people in general. The love of God and His benign countenance and protection of people devoted to Him is common to all the religions. While Islam is a late religious phenomenon, it is proposed by some scholars that the striking correspondences in externals between the Gītā's bhakti and the Christian love of God might be the result of borrowing the notices from Christianity. According to Edgerton, 'the correspondence is interesting but it certainly does not justify such a theory. Undoubtedly, the two religions developed independently. The Gita is now known to be almost certain pre-Christian in date. Garbe, however, proposes that 'the historical possibility of the author of the redaction must unquestionably be admitted ; but there are no grounds for regarding the view as even probable, much less certain.' No thought is found in the Gītā which may not be satisfactorily explained from the rich store house of ideas at the disposal of the Indian people, or from their characteristic mental disposition.

The three Paths of Salvation & the role of Actions :

The three ways of salvation recommended in the Gita are Karma-mārga, jñāna mārga and bhakti-mārga. The first one is no doubt widely publicised. The doctrine of Karma or action involves its result - good or bad - according to its ethical nature. Actions performed must have their fruits in continued



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phenomenon, it is proposed by some scholars that the striking
correspondence in essentials between the Qura'anic and
the Christian Gospels may not be the result of corruption
of the Muslim text but may be the result of corruption
of the Christian text. According to Gaster, the
correspondence is superficial but is certainly not fortuitous.
Such a theory, which claims the two religions developed indepen-
dently. The Qura'anic text is not known to be almost certain.
Christian is false. However, it is proposed that the historical
possibility of the author of the revelation was unquestionably
admitted; but there are no grounds for regarding the view
as even probable, much less certain. The theory is based on
the idea which may not be satisfactorily explained from the
last store house of ideas at the disposal of the Indian people.
The three characteristic mental dispositions

The Three Paths of Salvation & the Role of Actions

The three ways of salvation recommended to the Hindu
are Karma, Jnana and Bhakti. The first one
is Karma, which is the doctrine of action or activity.
The doctrine of Karma is based on the ethical
values of the result - good or bad - according to its ethical

existence while there are references to the practice of asceticism at a secluded place avoiding the external contacts of the senses with the objects in mind holding in check the senses the organs of thought and the consciousness or will for emancipation. (V. 27, 28). The Gītā in general is opposed to asceticism or to renunciation of action as such. It prescribes a religious justification for continuing normal human activities enjoined for a person according to his station in life. According to the Gītā, action is the outcome of desire or passion - positive or negative, for 'love' or 'hatred'. Since desire or passion is responsible for good or bad deed, this alone is one's enemy. 'It is desire, it is wrath', says the Lord, 'arising from the strand of passion. (Kāma eṣa Krodha eṣa rajoḡuṇa samvabhavaḥ). That is all consuming, very sinful and one's greatest enemy. (mahāśano mahāpāpma viddhyenam iha vairiṇam. III. 37). The term niyatam karma - implying 'enjoined action' or 'purposeful performance' occurs several times in the Gītā. One has to perform one's allotted duty (niyatam kuru karma), for action is superior to inaction (karma jyāyo hyakarmanah). Inaction cannot maintain one's body (śarīra-yātrāpi ca te), nor can one succeed without action (na prasi-ddhyed akarmanah) (III. 9). It is not advisable to abandon a prescribed duty (niyatasya tu samnyāsaḥ karmanoh nṛpapadyate - XVIII. 7). On the other hand, a prescribed duty which has to be performed need be done without caring for its fruit or being attached to it. (kāryam ity eva yat karma niyatam kriyate saṅgam tyaktvā phalam ^{caiva} ~~caiva~~ - XVIII. 9).

Actions and Desire :

The performance of action is to be free from desire

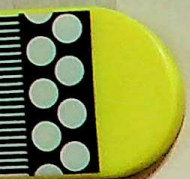


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 the Lord, 'arising from the strand of passion'. (Karma and Knowledge
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and purpose (kama-saṅkalpavarjitah. IV. 19). Further, no one can, even for an instant remain really actionless (na hi kaścit kṣanam api jātu tiṣṭhatyākarmakrit - III.5) for helplessly is every one propelled to action by his innate qualities (kāryate hyavasah karma sarvaḥ prakṛti-jair guṇaih (ibid). Equally the man who sits restraining the organs of action, but dwelling in his mind on the objects of his senses, deludes himself and is called a hypocrite (karmendriyāṇi sāmyamya yā āste manasā smaran, indriyārthan vimūḍhatmā mithyācārah sa ucyate- III.6). It is, therefore, proposed that repression of action actually causes the mind to run on even while the person's external expressions appear to be restrained. Such a person is a hypocrite. The inherited qualities or gunas also called strands as well play a leading role. One knowing the true insight into the respective spheres of gunas (modes of Prakriti) and their actions, holds that 'the strands act upon the strands' (guṇa guṇesu vartanta), and as such one does not get attached to them (iti matvā na sajjate - III. 28). The fool, however, feels as the egoist that he is the doer (ahaṅkāra-vimūḍhātma kartāham iti manyate - III. 27). As such, the man of profound knowledge acts in conformity with his own congenital nature (jñānavanā'pi sadrisam cestate svasyah - III. 33).

Paths of Great Men :

As the saying goes, 'Lives of great men make our lives sublime', The Gītā provides a similar ethical ideal of following the path laid down by great men like Janaka and others who attained perfection only through performance of duties. (karma-naiḥya hi sāmsiddhim āsthitā janakādayah - III. 20). Whatever



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can, even for an instant remain totally actionless (as he is
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Life of Great Men :

As the saying goes, 'Lives of great men make our lives
better'. The Gita provides a similar ethical ideal of following
the path laid down by great men like Janaka and others who
obtained perfection only through performance of duties. (karma-
samarthya - III. 20). Moreover

a great man does that very thing other men also do, (yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas tat tad evētarō janah. III. 21), and the standard set up by him is followed by others (sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokastad anuvartate (ibid). As the unwise act with attachment (saktāḥ karmany avidvāṃso yathā kurvanti. III. 25), so should the wise men act without attachment for the preservation of world order (kuryād vidvāṃs tathā saktas cikīrṣur loka-saṅgraham (ibid). The Gītā as well suggests that the wise and disciplined person need not cause confusion of mind in ignorants who are attached to action (ajñānam karma-saṅginām buddhibhedam janayet, III. 26) but allow them to enjoy all actions (joṣayet sarvakarmaṇi - ibid). The ignominious should not be disturbed by the man of perfect knowledge. (tān akṛtsna-vido mandān kṛtsnavin na vicālayet. III. 29).

Karma - a Relative Term :

Karma appears to be a relative term. According to the Gītā, once again, even the wise men fail to distinguish between action and inaction (kim karma kim akarmeti kavayo pyatra mohitah, IV. 16). One who understands the nature of action as also that of inaction or misaction is said to be enlightened among men. (karmany akarma yah paśyed, akarmani ca karma yah, sabuddhimān manusyesu). The Gītā distinguishes three types of actions - karma, akarma and vikarmaṇaḥ. The truth about each must be known - karmano hyapi bodhavyam bodhavyam ca vikarmaṇah, akarma-naśca bodhavyam, for mysterious are the ways of action. These imply the nature of action, inaction and misaction. The last one seems to imply actions not in conformity with one's prescribed duty. Akarmaṇaḥ is 'worklessness'. It is said to imply wisdom,

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'knowledge of the self' according to Rāmānujacārya. He who sees actions in their performance as being conformed (akara) to wisdom because they inhere in the very essence of the Self and who sees wisdom as being conformed to action because it indwells (antargatā). The wiseman (buddhimān) who sees inaction in action (karmany akarmayah pasyed) and action in inaction (akarmani/ca karma yah) is said to be enlightened among men (sa manusyesu buddhimān) he is integrated (yukta) and has performed all actions (kritsna karmakrit - IV. 18). ~~One~~ One's mental balance is undisturbed if he performs his duties in a detached spirit. Non-activity is in fact meant to preserve inner composure and make oneself free from attachment. One should therefore refrain from actions which are born of desire, and do duties with a soul linked with the Divine. He who works without attachment is not fettered. He is acting even in quietitude without any outward action. Śāṅkara explains that in ātman there is no action, in the body, however, there is no rest, even when there seems to be rest. Rāmānuja, however, suggests that akarma is ātma-jñāna. The wiseman is he who sees jñāna in the true performance of karma. He thinks that jñāna and karma go together.

Karma & its Fruits :

The Reference to Karma or Right Action in relation to its fruit is equally traced in several verses of the Gītā. Man has a right to action but not to its fruit (karmany evā'dhikāraṣṭe mā phalesu kadācana - II. 47). Further, let not the fruits of action be thy motive, nor be thy attachment to inaction (mā karmaphalahetur bhūr mā te sāṅgo'stv akarmani (ibid)). In another context, man is asked to abandon attachment to the fruit of

knowledge of the self, according to Ramanujacharya. He who
 sees actions in their performance as being conformed (skama)
 to wisdom because they inhere in the very essence of the Self
 and who sees wisdom as being conformed to action because it
 inheres (antaratma) in the action. The wise man (bodhi-man) who sees wisdom
 in action (karmayog) and action in wisdom (prajnyayog) is said to be enlightened among men
 (as manavyaya bodhi-man) he is interested (yukta) and has
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Skama & its fruits :

The reference to karma or right action in relation to
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 of action be thy motive, nor be thy attachment to fruit. In

action (tyaktvā karma-phalasaṃgaṃ) and be constantly content and independent (nityaṃ tripto niraśrayaḥ - IV. 20). Actions free from selfish attachments do not leave any karmic residue. The learned deem him to have realized the truth whose undertakings are all free from desire and thoughts of the world (yasya sarve samārambhāḥ kāmāḥ sankalpa varjitāḥ, tam āhuḥ paṇḍitaṃ budhāḥ) and whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom (jñāgni dagdha karmāṇaṃ - IV. 19).

Stress on performing enjoined duty :

The importance of performing enjoined duty both as a part of discipline and also of renunciation is equally stressed in another context. The Lord points out at the beginning of the VIIth Chapter named Dhyāna-Yoga - the Discipline of Meditation that one not interested in the fruit of action (anāśritaḥ karma-phalam) but performing that action enjoined on him (by religion) (kāryaṃ karma karoti yaḥ) is both a sanyāsin as also a yogi - possessor of qualities of renunciation and dedication with discipline, even though he does not keep sacrificial fire (na niragnair) nor interested in the performance of (ritual) action (na cā 'kriyaḥ - VI. 1). In fact, action is called the means for the sage desiring to ascend the path of discipline. (āruruṅksor muner yogam karma kāraṇaṃ ucyate - VI. 3). The disciplined man abandoning the fruit of actions attain abiding peace (yuktaḥ karma phalam tyaktvā śāntim ānotti naiṣṭikīm - V. 12) which the undisciplined, by action due to desire, attached to its fruit, is fettered (ayuktaḥ kāmakāreṇa phale sakto nibadhyate (ibid)). Thus, abandoning attachment, the disciplined man performing (stipulated) action attains self-purification (Yoginaḥ karma kurvanti saṅgaṃ tyaktvā tma śuddhaye - V. 11).

action (karma) and be contently satisfied and
 independent (nitya trishna nirasrayah - IV. 20). Actions free
 from selfish attachments do not leave any Karma residue. The
 learned deem him to have realized the truth whose understandings
 are all free from desire and thoughts of the world (yasa sarva
 samaropah kama-sankalpa virahita, sa eva paratattva jnani, and
 whose actions are burnt up by the fire of wisdom (jyoti-rahita)
 karmaham - IV. 19).

Stress on performing enjoined duty :

The importance of performing enjoined duty both as a
 part of discipline and also of renunciation is equally stressed
 in another context. The Lord points out at the beginning of the
 fifth Chapter named Maya-Yoga - the Discipline of Meditation
 that one not interested in the fruit of action (asaktah)
(karma bhajam) but performing that action enjoined on him by
 religion (karma karma kanoth yaj) is both a sannyasi as also a
 yogi - possessor of qualities of renunciation and dedication
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 (as niragnayah) not interested in the performance of (ritual)
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(Kartavyam muner yodam karma karanam ucyate - VI. 3). The
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 VI. 4) which the undisciplined, by action due to desire, attached
 to its fruit, is fettered (ayukta karmabhirama gata sakti
 - VI. 5). Thus, abandoning attachment, the disciplined
 man performing (acting) without attachment

Discipline of Renunciation :

In the last chapter entitled Moksa-Sanyasa Yoga - Discipline of Renunciation and Salvation, the Lord praises the abandonment of all action - fruits (sarva karma phala tyāgam prāhūs tyāgam vicakṣanah - XVIII - 2). It is equally repeated after a few verses. He who abandons the fruit of action is called the man of (true) abandonment - yas tu karma-phala tyāgī sa tyāgīty abhidhiyate - XVIII. 11). And still further, an action for which no fruit is desired is called sāttvikā (aphala prepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam ucyate - XVIII - 23). The Lord asks the devotee to be dependent on Him. By His Grace he attains the eternal, imperishable state, even though performing all actions. (sarva karmāny api sadā kurvāno mad vyapāśrayah, mat prasādāt avāpnoti śāśvatam padam avyayam. XVIII. 56). The performance of all actions in the name of God and bereft of all feelings of Egoism ensures crossing the ocean of existence. 'If thy mind is on Me', says the Lord, 'all difficulties shall thou cross over by My Grace'. (mac cittah sarva durgāni mat prasādāt tarisyasi - XVIII. 58). But if with your Egoism you will not held, you shall perish (atha cīt tvam ahaṁkāraṇ na'śroṣyasi vinankṣyasi - ibid). Much earlier in the third chapter; false sense of egoism is condemned (ahaṁkāra vimūdhātma kartāham iti manyate - III. 27).

The God's command & Action :

In the final analysis man is told to act under the command of God fulfilling duties enjoined on him according to his situations in life without attachment and desire for fruits.



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 even though performing all actions. (XVIII - 30).
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 ...the last chapter entitled 'The Lord's Promise' -

In the final analysis man is told to act under the
 command of God fulfilling duties enjoined on him according to
 the situation in life without attachment and desire for fruits.

He should throw the responsibility on God and not question His wisdom. By so doing he is freed from the bondage of 'Karma' itself. (ye mānavah me matam idam nityamanutisthanti śraddhāvanto' nasūyanto mucyante te'pi karmabhiḥ - III. 31). Mysterious are the ways of action (gahanā karmano gati - IV. 17). and even the wise are puzzled over the relativity of action - and inaction and their relation to each other (kavayo' pyatra mohitāḥ - IV. 16). The Gītā calls him a yogi who has performed all actions (sa yuktaḥ kṛtsnakarmakṛt - IV. 18) and he is equally happy. (sa yuktaḥ sa sukhi narah - V. 23). The wise call him a sage (tam āhuh paṇḍitaṁ budhāḥ - IV. 19); and still he does nothing at all (naḥva kiñcit karoti saḥ - IV. 20, V. 8). He is only a nimitta mātram - an instrument of action. What a philosophy of life and karma? The basic thing is that man must act without the sense of possession and egoism, with a spirit of detachment and that alone ensures the attainment of true knowledge (jñāna). There is no ambiguity, no incongruity and no inconsistency in this simple philosophy of action which seeks to integrate action, knowledge and devotion leading to final liberation. All actions melt away (karma samagram prāṇīyate) when one is free from attachment (gata sangatsya muktasya) and the mind is established in the knowledge of the self (jñāna vasthita cetasa - IV. 23).

God-omniscient and for all :

God is not the monopoly of anybody - personal or sect. One who sees God in all and all in Him (mām paśyati sarvatra sarvaṁ ca mayi paśyati - VI. 30) never loses sight of Him (tasyāham na praṇasyāmi) nor does He fail to notice him (sa ca me na pranaśyati - ibid). He who acts in this spirit need

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not fear that his actions would bind him to further existence. He is assured of reaching Him (sa māṃ eti - XI. 55). In the Bhagavad Gītā, knowledge is not the only way that leads to salvation ; that could be reached also through bhakti (loving faith) or by work (karma). But works, to be efficacious for salvation, must be disinterested. The Karma-yoga - the gospel of works has two phases. In the first one the follower of the rule must discharge all his religious and social obligations in utter indifference and unattachment to their fruits. He then makes a sacrifice of all his works to the Lord so that these no longer bind his soul to existence. ^D These detached from all desires and the fruits accruing from his actions, he gains final redemption.

The Gita stress on Knowledge :

The Gītā stress on knowledge is equally evident from the verse that all actions without any exception culminate in knowledge (sarvam karmā 'kṛilam jñāne parisāṃpyate - IV.33) and sacrifice through knowledge is superior to sacrifice performed with material things ('sreyan dravyamayād yajñai jñānayajnah - ibid). In the fire of knowledge all actions are reduced to ashes (jñānāgniḥ sarvakarmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute - IV. 37), in the same way as the blazing fire turns the fuel to ashes (yathā dḥāṃsi samiddho'gnir bhasmasāt kurute - ibid). Further, on earth there is no purer as great as knowledge (na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitram iha vidyate - IV. 38). Having attained knowledge, one easily attains supreme peace (jñānam labdhvā parāṃ śāntim acireṇādhigacchati - IV. 39). Moreover, according to the Gītā, actions do not bind him who has dedicated

all his actions to God in consonance with the spirit of Karma yoga (ātmavantam na karmāni nibadhanti - IV. 41).

The Karma and mental poise :

Karma or action must equally bring contentment (yadricchā-lābha sāmuto) with immunity from jealousy (vimatsarah), transcending all pains of opposite (like joy and grief (dvandā-tīta) and equipoise in success and failure (samaḥ siddhāvāsiddhau ca). Such a person is then unfettered by his action (kritva'pi na nibadhyate - IV. 22). Taking part in actions as a disinterested person, the three strands of matter do not perturb him but he stands firm and unmoved with complete indifference to the environment or the results thereof, and thus transcends the strands of matter. The Gita provides an intellectual basis to its central doctrine of disciplined activity. It as well provides general principles acceptable to thinkers of all shades of opinion. It enjoins subduing of wavering impulses and holding fast in thought to God with complete faith or śraddha.

The State of Yoga :

In an atmosphere of stillness and calmness, the firm control of the mind is necessary for acquiring spiritual vision. When the mind does not flickle like a lamp in a sheltered spot (yadā dīpo nivatastho ne'ngate), seeing the self by the self, one is satisfied in himself ; where one experiences the absolute bliss only to understand even beyond the senses and standing firm one swerves not from the truth ; where no other gain is considered greater, and, where one is not moved by the greatest pain that state is called yoga (VI. 19-26). In fact, yoga is the suppression of mental activity (vritti nirodha) and jñāna is true compre-



all the actions to God in accordance with the will of Karma
Yoga (Karmayoga) as Karma (Karmayoga) - IV. 10.

The Karma and mental noise

Karma or action must equally bring its own result (Karma
Yoga (Karmayoga) with immunity from its own result (Karmayoga)
transcending all pairs of opposite like joy and sorrow (Karmayoga)
and equanimity in success and failure (Karmayoga) - IV. 29.
 Such a person is then unaffected by the action (Karmayoga)
is called a Karma Yogi - IV. 29. For the part in action as a disinterested
 person, the Karma Yogi is not concerned with the result of
 his action, but is absorbed in the action itself, and thus transcends the
 result of the action, and thus transcends the result of
 action. The Karma Yogi provides an intellectual basis to the
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 the self from the truth; where no other gain is realized
 and where one is not moved by the material world.
 is called Yoga (Yoga) - IV. 29.

hension (saṁyogavekṣanāni). The control of senses and indifference to the attraction of material objects is possible only with the acquisition of knowledge. The Lord tells Arjuna that once that is attained in the form of enlightenment, ignorance deludes you no more (yaj jñatvā na punar moham evam yāsyasi pāṇḍava), and you see the entire creation first within yourself and then in Me (the Over soul) (yena bhūtāny aśeṣeṇa drakṣyasi ātmany atho mayi - IV. 35). The vision of God in oneself is the spiritual illumination, attained in an atmosphere of joy and contentment. The entire life - aspiration becomes one continuous adoration of the Infinite. In the words of the Lord, 'among the devotees the best is the man of wisdom, ever established in identity with Me and possessed of exclusive devotion (tesām jñānī nitya yuktā eka bhaktir viśiṣyate - VII. 17). I am extremely dear to the wise man (who knows Me in reality) and he is equally dear to Me (priyo hi jñānino'tyartham aham sa ca mama priyah - VII. 17). The man of wisdom is My very self; such is My view. (jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam). For such a devotee, who has his mind and intellect merged in Me, is firmly established in Me alone, the highest goal. (āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā mām evānuttamam gatim. VII. 18).

Doctrine of Activity with Indifference to fruits :

In brief the Gītā preaches the doctrine of activity with indifference to results accruing from it. It as well desires one to place himself and his activities at the service of the God - with faith and complete devotion. The Lord points out that even of those who strive and perfect themselves, rarely does one know Me in truth (manuṣyānām sahasreṣu ... kaścin mām vetti tattvataḥ. VII. 3). Knowledge, whether of Brahman or of

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a personal God is 'hard to attain'. The difficulties of the intellectual method are equally emphasised at many places in the Gītā. For the most of mankind, the easier path is the emotional one of salvation. In the words of the Lord, He who always reverts Me with thoughts ever straying to no other object, for him, I am easy to attain (yo mām smṛati nityasah tasyāham sulabhah. - VIII. 14). In fact, the religion of the Gītā is a compromise between the speculation of the intellectual and the emotionalism of popular religion called bhaktism.

Devotion and Knowledge :

The scheme of salvation through devotion does not displace the theory of salvation through knowledge. By devoted love of God one can attain knowledge (of God). 'By devotion', says the Lord, 'one comes to know Me (bhaktiā mām abhijānati) ; then knowing Me in very truth (tato mām tattvato jñatva), he straight way enters into Me (viśate tad anantaram) - XVIII. 55). Thus, it is not difficult to reconcile the theory of devotion with the theory that knowledge of God is what brings man to union with Him, and that is salvation. The Gītā, however, speaks of devotion as the immediate and equally sufficient enough for the final union with God. 'Fix thy mind and devotion of Me ; worship and revere Me, thou shalt come even to Me by disciplining thy soul in full devotion to Me' (mān mānā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru, mām evaiśyasi yuktvaīyam ātmānam matā parāyanah - IX. 34). Those who laying all actions upon Me, meditate on Me and revere Me with utterly unswerving devotion, for them I speedily become the saviour from the ocean of round of rebirths and deaths because their thoughts are fixed on Me. (XII. 6-7). One is, therefore, enjoined to 'resign

a personal God is 'hard to attain'. The difficulties of the intellectual method are equally emphasized at many places in the Gita. For the most of mankind, the easier path is the emotional one of salvation. In the words of the Lord, He who always reverts Me with thoughts ever straying to no other object for him, I am easy to attain (yo na samatī nityam bhaktiḥ - VIII. 14). In fact, the religion of the Gita is a compromise between the speculation of the intellectual and the emotionalism of popular religion called bhakti.

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all actions to God', and perform his own natural duty as a service to God. (yad karosi ... tat kurusva mad arpanam. IX.27).

Eclecticism in Gita :

The Gītā is eclectic in its approach and provides for toleration in the form of worship. While it prescribes complete unswerving devotion to the God for release from bondage, it as well suggests that performance of Vedic sacrifices are freed from all sins (yajña-sistāsinah santo mucyante sarvakilbīṣaih - III. 13), but it is wicked to be selfish in the performance of such acts. The gods would provide desired enjoyment (iṣṭān bhogān hi vo devā dāsyante yajñabhāvitah). But they equally expect gifts in return and the one who does nothing in return is a thief (tair dattān apradāyaibhyo yo bhunkte stena eva saḥ - III. 12). There are references in the Gītā recommending performance of sacrificial acts as part of man's duty without any attachment. Actions of sacrifice, alms and penance need not be abandoned (yajña-dāna-tapah-karma na tyājyaṁ kāryam eva tat - XVIII. 5). These are purifying for the wise pavanāni manīṣinām - *ibid*. These have to be performed with abandonment of attachment and fruit (etany api tu karmāni saṅgam tyaktvā phalāni ca - XVIII. 6). Sacrifice is used in a wider perspective including different kinds of religious practices, restraint of the senses, devotion to the Brahmans, ascetic austerities, disciplined activity (yoga) and knowledge (dravya-yajñas tapo-yajña yogayajñas tathāpare, svādhyāyajnanayajñas ca yatayah saṁsitavrataḥ - IV. 28). It is, however, added that 'the sacrifice of knowledge is better than material sacrifice' (śrāyaṁ dravya mayād yajñaj jñanayajñah - IV. 33). This means the intellectual method of salvation. There are, of course, several

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passages which treat ritual religion with little respect, such as those who desire the success of acts of sacrifice in this world to gods and not to God whom they know not. The Lord points out that 'whoever seeks to worship with true faith and devotion any (other) form (of deity) for him I make that same faith unswerving (yo-yo yām-yām tanum bhaktah s'raddhayārcitum icchatī, tasya-tasyācalām śraddhām tām eva vidadhamy aham - VII. 21). True and righteous ritualists worshipping Me by means of sacrifices duly succeed in gaining the sensuous heaven - one of the traditional rewards of ritualism and enjoy divine pleasure these (te punyam āsādyā surendralokam aśnanti divyān divi devabhoḡam - ^{IX.}VI. 20). When the effect of their religious merit is exhausted, such men fall to earth again (ksīṇe punye martyalokam viśanti - ^{IX.}VI. 21). The final goal of release from all existence is never achieved.

The Gita and the Materialists :

The Gītā is, of course, opposed to the philosophy of the materialists who say that world is untrue, without any basis, without God, not produced by regular mutual causation, but motivated by desire (asatyam apratistham te jagad āhur anīśvaram aparaspara sambhūtam kim anyat kama haitukam - XVI. 8). The philosophy of the materialists is no doubt looked down in the Gītā. The materialists have no basic religion and philosophy, and no guiding principle in the world. For them there is no God, no Soul and no life after death nor are they worried about the outcome of their actions. For them the wisest person is one who is devoted to thorough



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vidhanyat - VII. 21. True and righteous rituals
 worshipped by means of sacrifices duly succeed in gaining
 the generous heaven - one of the traditional rewards of ritua-
 lism and enjoy divine pleasure there (in higher realms)
śraddhāḥ śaktiḥ śraddhāḥ śaktiḥ śraddhāḥ śaktiḥ - VII. 21.
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 They are devoted to the world.

worldly enjoyment. The Gita is not opposed to those who worship gods. Those who revere (the popular or ritualistic) gods go to such gods ; those who revere Me go to Me, in the words of the Lord (devān deva yajo yanti mad-bhaktā yanti mām api - VII. 23). So each religion brings its own reward, but in a limited way. Finally, one should abandon all (other) religious duties, and make (the one true) God alone his refuge (sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja - XVIII. 66).

The Gītā on Divine and Demoniac characteristic :

The practical aspect of life in its ethical and moral background is as well brought out in the Gita. It can be called a compendium of ethical and moral value - Chapter XVI entitled Daivāsura Sampāda Vibhāga Yoga - 'Discipline of Distinction between Divine and Demoniac Lots' is concerned with morality. It highlights the cardinal virtues and the deadly sins. It refers to two types of beings in this world - the godly and the devilish. Pure and fearless, steadfast in the exercise of wisdom, open-handed and restrained, performing sacrifice, intent on studying Holy scriptures, ascetic and upright, hurting none, truthful, free from anger, renouncing all at peace, averse to calumny, compassionate to all beings, free from greed, gentle, modest, never fickle, ardent, patient, enduring pure, free from treachery and arrogance - such are described as the characteristics of the man born for a godly destiny (sampadām daivam abhijātasya - XVI. 3) implying deliverance. The devilish destiny man, on the other hand, is a hypocrite, proud of himself, angry and arrogant, harsh and ignorant. Insatiate desire is his starting point,

worldly enjoyment. The Gita is not opposed to those who worship gods. Those who revere (the popular or ritualistic) gods do so for such gods; those who revere the gods in the words of the Lord (devan deva yaish kanti and bhakti yam) are not in a limited way. So each religion stands on its own merits but in a limited way. Finally, one should abandon all (other) religious duties, and make (the one) and alone his religion (sarva dharmah paritraya may eva samanyam yaish - XVII, 21).

The Gita and the Bhagavad Gita

The practical aspect of life in the ethical and moral

background is as well brought out in the Gita. It can be

called a combination of ethical and moral value - Chapter XVI

entitled Arjuna Samadhi Bhagavad Gita - Bhagavad Gita

distinction between Divine and Humanistic life is concerned

with morality. It highlights the cardinal virtues and the

deadly sins. It refers to two types of people in this world -

the godly and the devilish. Pure and fearless, steadfast in

the exercise of wisdom, open handed and restrained, perform-

ing sacrifice, intent on studying Holy scriptures, ascetic

and upright, hurting none, truthful, free from anger, without

clinging all at peace, averse to calumny, compassionate to all

beings, free from greed, gentle, modest, never fickle, ardent

patient, enduring pure, free from treachery and arrogance -

such are described as the characteristics of the man born

in a godly destiny (bhagavad bhakti yam - XVI, 21)

involved deliverance. The devilish destiny man, on the other

hand, is a hypocrite, proud of himself, angry and arrogant,

greedy and dishonest. He is a man of a low standing point.

maddened by hypocrisy and conceit clutching at false notions, he tries to build up wealth through improper and unjustified means to satisfy his lust, with his unfettered aspirations. Boasting of his wealth and muscle power and proud of his false vanity, he is ignorant and deluded. Selfishness, force and pride, desire and anger are the fortes of such persons who envy and hate Me, says the Lord, while I dwell in their bodies (ahankāram balam darpaṁ kāmaṁ krodhaṁ ca samsritāḥ mām ātma para dehesu pradviṣanto 'bhyasūyakāḥ - XVI. 18). These men obsessed with hate and cruel nature are hurled into devilish wombs birth after birth. Further, in the words of the Lord, 'Desire, Anger and Greed (kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas) is the triple gate of hell (tri-vidham narakasyedam dvāraṁ - XVI. 21). He who forsakes the laws of scripture, and lives according to his own wilful desire (yah śāstrovidhim utsrijya varṭate kāma kārataḥ) does not obtain perfection nor bliss, nor the highest goal (na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na param gatam - XVI. 23). According to the Gītā, all the vices are eventually traced to three primary weaknesses - desire or lust, wrath and greed. Desire of course is the root of all evils. It leads a person to 'resolve and to action' which must have its fruit in continued material existence ; and all material existence is evil.

The Egalitarian approach in the Gītā :

The Gītā as well enjoins people to treat all creatures alike, from the highest to the lowest. The wise ones see the self same thing (panditāḥ sama darśinaḥ) in a Brahmin wise and courteous (vidyā-vinaya sampanne brāhmaṇe) as in a cow, or an elephant, nay as in a dog or outcaste (gavi hastini śuni caiva - V. 18). The Lord as well calls that person outstanding whose



influenced by hypocrisy and cannot distinguish a false notion
 he tries to build up wealth through dishonest and unwholesome
 means to satisfy his lust, with his unwholesome intentions.
 Hoarding of his wealth and amassing power and grandeur of his false
 nobility, he is ignorant and deluded. Selfishness, false and
 pride, desire and anger are the factors of such persons who
 envy and hate me, says the Lord, while I dwell in their bodies
अन्धकारं धृष्ट्या दृष्ट्वा कुरुष्व कुरुष्व कुरुष्व - XVI. 12. These men
 oppressed with false and cruel nature are hurled into evil
 womb birth again birth. Further in the words of the Lord,
 desire, anger and greed (काम क्रोध लोभ) is the
 triple gate of hell (त्रिविधं नरकवर्षाद्वारं) - XVI. 21.
 he who forsakes the laws of righteousness, and lives according to
 his own selfish desire (यान् अस्वर्गं विन्दति स्वार्थं)
निराशं does not obtain perfection nor bliss, nor the highest
 goal (न स शिवाय अवान्ति न युक्तं न परं यत्नं) - XVII. 2.
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 material existence; and all material existence is evil.

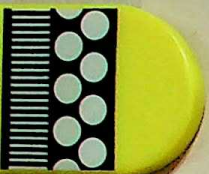
The Spiritual Approach in the Gita :

The Gita as well enjoins people to treat all creatures
 alike, from the highest to the lowest. The wise ones see the
 same thing (पश्यन्ति सर्वं धर्मज्ञः) in a human wise and
 animals (यथा-यथा-संज्ञा-संज्ञा-संज्ञा) as in a cow, or as
 a horse, may be in a dog or a cat (यथा-यथा-संज्ञा-संज्ञा-संज्ञा).

soul views in the same way friends, comrades, enemies, those indifferent, neutrals who are hateful, and those who are his kin - the good and the evil too (suhrin-mitrāry-udāsina - madhyastha - dvesya-bandhusu, sādhusu api ca pāpesu sama-buddhir viśisyate - VI. 9). As one's own self or soul is identical with that of others (sarvabhūtama bhūtātmā - V. 7), and finding himself as in all beings and all beings in himself (sarvabhūtastham ātmanam - sarvabhūtāni cātmani - VI. 29), the disciplined person is enjoined to cultivate a humanitarian attitude towards men and creatures. He must treat all creatures alike, from the highest to the lowest like himself (ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśyati - VI. 32) and engaged in the welfare of all beings (sarva-bhūta-hite rataḥ - V.25).

Stress on Universal unity and Brotherhood :

The Gītā thus stresses on the unity of mind. One has to eschew selfishness and think in terms of good to others. This is something noble and ideal and should be widely acceptable. The Great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy in his book "What I believe" (1895) quoted in the World Treasury of Religious Quotations, as well points out, 'I now understand that my welfare is only possible if I acknowledge my unity with all the people of the world without exception'. The Gītā as a book of religion provides its contribution to the unity of all human beings not in the intellectual but in the spiritual realm. It as well provides a code of conduct for every body, according to his situation, inherent qualities (guna) and background. The varanās'rama scheme is said to be created by the Lord. In his words 'the four caste-system was created by Me with distinction of strands and actions (appropriate to



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each) (cāturvarṇyam mayā śrīṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhagaśah - IV. 13). The three constituents of Nature include reference to food of three kinds (XVII. 7-12) - the sāttvika - that promotes a fuller life, vitality, strength, pleasure and good feeling. The rajas one is pungent, sour, salty, stinking hot, sharp, rough and burning. It is loved by the men of passion and equally brings pain, misery and sickness. (duḥkha-śokamayā pradah). The tamas food is stale and tasteless, rotten and decayed - leavings or left over (XVII. 10). In fact the Gītā provides a code of life and conduct as could be pursued for final liberation. It does not concentrate on any social strata or a particular period of life but covers the entire span and includes the humanity as a whole. It has a message for everybody and provides solace to the distressed and one in mental vacuum. It equally encourages people to perform their enjoined duties as dharma - a synonym for duty. Further one's dharma, though imperfect, is better than another's well performed (śreyān svadharmo viguṇah paradharmāt svanuṣṭhitāt - III. 35). Better is death in (doing) one's own duty, and another's duty brings danger (svadharme nidhanam śreyah paradharmo bhayāvahah - ibid).

Norms for the ideal man and Devotion to God :

The Bhagavad-Gītā also prescribes norms and nuances for an ideal man, and a man of perfect wisdom. In chapter XII entitled 'Bhakti Yoga' - Discipline of Devotion, the Lord takes knowledge to be better than practice (ś'reyo hi jñānam abhyasa) and meditation superior to knowledge (jñānād dhyānam viśisyate) and better than meditation is abandonment of the fruit of



each) (अनुवर्त्यमानं नयति) - 17. 10. 11.
 The three constituents of nature include reference to food
 of three kinds (XVII. 7-12) - the satvik - that promotes
 a fuller life, vitality, strength, clearness and good feeling.
 The rajas one is pungent, sour, salty, stinking hot, sharp,
 rough and burning. It is loved by the men of passion and
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 (XVIII. 47) अथैवमर्थो विदुषां परमार्थोऽविद्वद्भिः - 18. 47.
 Better is death in (doing) one's own duty, and another's duty
 things danger (XVIII. 48) अथैवमर्थो विदुषां परमार्थोऽविद्वद्भिः - 18. 48.

Now for the ideal man and devotion to God
 The Bhagavad Gita also prescribes bhakti and bhakti
 of an ideal man, and a man of perfect wisdom. In Chapter XII
 entitled 'Bhakti Yoga' - Discipline of Devotion, the Lord takes
 passage to be better than practice (XVIII. 53) अथैवमर्थो विदुषां परमार्थोऽविद्वद्भिः
 of devotion superior to knowledge (XVIII. 54) अथैवमर्थो विदुषां परमार्थोऽविद्वद्भिः
 and better than gyana (XVIII. 55) अथैवमर्थो विदुषां परमार्थोऽविद्वद्भिः - 18. 55.

actions, since it ensures peace immediately (dhyānāt karma-phala tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir anantaram - XII. 12). The disciplined man (satatam yogī) should eschew hatred, be friendly and compassionate, free from egoism and indifferent to pain and pleasure, and be patient. He is always content, self-controlled, of firm resolve, with thought and consciousness fixed on Me (mayy-arpitamaⁿo buddhir) and devoted to Me (madbhaktaḥ - XII. 13-14). People do not shrink (n'odvijate loko) and who does not shrink from them (lokān n'odvijate ca yaḥ) and who is free from exaltation, fear, impatience and excitement (harṣāmarṣa-bhayodvegair mukto yaḥ) is dear to Me (XII. 15). He has no expectation, is pure and skilled, indifferent, free from worry, gives up all (selfish) undertaking (sarvārambha parityāgī). He possesses equanimity of mind neither delights nor loathes, grieves or craves, renouncing good and evil (objects) (XII. 17) alike to foe and friend (samaḥ śātrau ca mitre ca), as also to honour and disgrace (tathā mānāpamānayoḥ), cold and heat, joy and sorrow (śītoṣṇa-sukha dukkheṣu samaḥ) and free from attachment (saṅga-vivarjitah). He is equally poised in blame and praise (tulya nindā-stutir), restrained in speech (mauni), contented (santusta), of steadfast mind (sthiramatir) and without permanent home (aniketaḥ). These requirements in a perfect man are called the nectar of duty (dharmyā-mṛitam idaṁ - XII. 20). In another context the Lord refers to showing reverence to gods and brahmans, teachers and wisemen (devadvija-guru prajñā-pūjanam) purity (śaucam), uprightness (ārjavam), chastity (brahmacaryam) and non-injury (ahimsā) as ingredients of austerity of the body. There are also subsequent references

to austerity of the mind and that of speech (XVII. 14). Words that do not cause disquiet, (words) truth, kind and pleasing. The constant practice of sacred recitation is the penance of the tongue. Severity of mind and friendliness, silence and self-restraint, and the cleansing of one's affection - is called the penance of the mind.

Stress on steady wisdom :

The Gītā as well lays stress on steady wisdom and describes in a couple of verses the qualities of the man of stabilised mentality in Chapter II. When a man parts from his all desires that encroach upon his mind, and contents himself in self alone he is called a man of steady wisdom (sthita-prajñastado'cyate (II. 55). This state is equally applicable when the mind is not perturbed in sorrow (duhkhesv anudvignamanah) and has no longing for joys (sukheṣu vigatasprihaḥ) with his longing, fear and wrath departed (ḥīta-rāga-bhaya krodhaḥ - II. 56). He withdraws, as a tortoise, his limbs from all sides, his senses from the objects of sense (kūrmo'nganiva sarvasaḥ indriyāṇi 'ndriyārthebhyas - II. 58). He has no desire towards anything, and does not delight in getting anything, good or evil (tat-tat prāpya śubhāśubham nābhinandati na dveṣṭi - II. 57). The objects of sense turn away (viśaya vinivartante - II. 59). The whole impetuous senses, however, carry away the mind by violence of the man of discernment (puruṣasya vipaścitāḥ indriyāṇi pramathāni haranti prasabhaṇi manah - II. 60). Thus, one who has withdraws from all sides the senses from the objects of sense, his mentality is stabilised (nigrhitāni sarvaśaḥ indriyāṇi 'ndriyārthebhyas tasya prajñā pratisthitā - II. 68). As such, abandoning all desires (vihāya kāmāṇi yaḥ sarvair) man moves free from



on stability of the mind and that of steady wisdom. The mind does not cause disturbance, (vibrations, fluctuations, and the constant practice of steady wisdom is the removal of the content. Steadiness of mind and firmness, silence and self-restraint, and the cleansing of one's affection - is called the renunciation of the mind.

Stress on steady wisdom :

The state as well as steady wisdom and meditation in a couple of verses the qualities of the man of steady wisdom are described in Chapter II. When a man gets free from all desires that attach upon his mind, and contents himself in self alone he is called a man of steady wisdom (Chapter II. 50). This state is equally applicable when the mind is not perturbed in sorrow (Chapter II. 51) and has no longing for joy (Chapter II. 52). The man of steady wisdom is free from all sides the senses from the objects of sense, he withdraws, as a tortoise, his limbs from all sides, his senses from the objects of sense (Chapter II. 53). He has no desire towards anything, and does not delight in getting anything, good or evil (Chapter II. 54). The object of sense turn away (Chapter II. 55). The whole of the sense, however, carry away the mind by violence of the mind of attachment (Chapter II. 56). Thus, one who has withdrawn from all sides the senses from the objects of sense, his stability is established (Chapter II. 57). As such, so nothing

longing (pumāṇus pumas' carati nihsprīhah); without self interest and egotism he attains peace (nirmamo nirahankārah sa śāntim adhigacchati - II. 71).

The first half of the last chapter (XVIII) entitled - Mokṣasanyāsayoga - the 'Discipline of Renunciation' unto salvation' sums up the teaching of the Gospel very explicitly within the framework of the philosophy of desireless action. People are asked to perform their duties in a selfless spirit as enjoined on them according to their background and environmental situation. Thus, the Bhagavad Gītā's stress upon the ethics of action culminates in the doctrine that man should certainly act according to his duty but without any consideration for success or failure, or troubling about the possible fruit. This 'desireless' action is the ideal preached in the Gītā. Working as best as they can in their vocations according to their natural strands (gunas) men are to train themselves in detachment with all their actions dedicated to God. The three paths of salvation - knowledge with meditation, action, and devotion are ably and carefully integrated to form a uniform path of attaining deliverance. If one were to suggest the single verge or passage likely to have an universal appeal irrespective of personal faith or predilection, one would like to quote from the Puruṣottama Yoga (Chapter XV) - nirmāṇa mohā jita saṅga doṣa adhyātma-nitya vinivṛita-kāmaḥ dvandvair vimuktāḥ sukha dukha sañjñair gacchanty amūdhah padam avayayām tat (XV. 5) 'Without pride or delusion, victors over the sin of attachment'. Constant in the over soul, their desire departed ; Freed from the pairs known as pleasure and pain undeluded men go to that eternal place.

Authorship and Date of the Bhagavad Gita :

Scholars are at variance in their opinion about the authorship of the *Gītā* as also its probable date of composition. Some of them take Bhagavad-*Gītā* not a systematic, philosophical work but a mystical poem. In the words of Franklin Edgert^{on}, it is poetic, mystical and devotional, rather than logical and philosophical. W. Von Humbolt proposed that 'It is a sage, speaking out of the fulness and inspiration of his knowledge and of his feeling, not a philosopher trained in a school, classifying his material in accordance with a definite method and arriving at the last principles of his doctrine by a skilful chain work of ideas'. On the other hand, other scholars maintain that there are limits even for mystic poetry and that the contradictions in the *Gītā* can better be explained by the assumption that the poem has not come down to us in its original form, but like most parts of the Mahābhārata has only received its present form as a result of interpolations and revisions. Thus, scholars had assumed that the Bhagavad-*Gītā* was originally a pantheistic poem which was later on remodelled by the Vaiṣṇavites into a theistic one. This is considered very improbable, because the work is predominantly theistic. God, according to the *Gītā*, is essentially a personal god, who as a teacher and in human incarnation demands bhakti or devotion of his worshippers.

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seems congruous to enter into a long and philosophical dialogue relating to the various forms of devotion for the emancipation of soul when the two contending forces are arrayed at the battle field. K.T. Telang, however, partially agrees with this view point but equally suggests that the 'Bhagavad-Gītā' is an independent work appropriated by the author of the Mahābhārata for his own purpose. It can hardly be doubted that it is only in grave crisis such as at the battle field that the mind concentrates on the ultimate values of life. The spiritually disposed minds acquire the tension necessary in such situations, enabling them to concentrate on the reality of life and acquire mental equanimity. There is, therefore, nothing to doubt of the Gītā being originally connected with the Great Epic as part of it. The stylistic resemblances between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata show that they belong to one piece. But even assigning the Bhagavad-Gītā to the Mahābhārata as a genuine part of it, one cannot be sure of its date, since the Great Epic itself is a product of different periods.

Telang's Views :

Telang in his long Introduction has discussed the question of its date primarily on the internal evidence provided by the Gītā Text itself. The various heads of consideration in this context are the general character of the Gītā with reference to its mode of handling its subject, the character of its style and language, the nature of verification in the text and finally sundry points of detail such as the attitude of the Gītā towards the Vedas, and towards matters of social interest like castes and other systems of speculation and the like.

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This work, according to Telang, bears on the face of it very plain marks indicating that it belongs to an age prior to the system-making age of Sanskrit philosophy. Comparing the *Bhagavad-Gītā* with the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali, Telang suggests that in the former 'you have the germs, and noteworthy germs too of a system, and you have most of the raw material of a system, but you have no readymade system'. In his words, 'the Gita is non-systematic work and in that respect belongs to the same class as the older Upanishads' (p. 13). On grounds of style also it belongs to an age considerably prior to the epoch of the artificial department of Sanskrit literature. In its general character, the style impresses one as quite archaic in its simplicity. The style is by no means devoid of aesthetic merit like the style of the *Sūtra* literature. The *Gītā* is removed by a considerable linguistic and chronological distances from classical Sanskrit literature.

The character of the versification (of the *Gītā*) in adhering to the metrical scheme is as well taken by Telang as one test of the chronological position of a work - the later the work, the more undeviating is such adherism. The argument from the versification of the *Gītā* indicates its position as being prior to the classical literature, and nearly contemporaneous with the Upanishad literature. The author of the *Gītā* does not throw the Vedas entirely overboard. He feels and expresses reverence for them of a somewhat specific character. The precepts of the Vedas are considered suitable to a certain class of intellectual and spiritual status, and nothing more. The *Gītā* is grouped with the Upanishad in finding hope of salvation and salvation by the individual self recognising the true and universal self and finding

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rest there alone. Telang draws the inference that the Upanishads of the Vedas (Vedānta) were composed at a time not far remote from the time of the composition of the Gītā, and at that period the Upanishads had not yet risen to the position of high importance which they afterwards commanded. (p. 10). The word 'Vedānta' in Chapter XV of the Gītā (15) is supposed to signify the Āraṇyakas. It is at the close of this epoch that the date of the Gītā could be assigned. Telang takes the second century B.C. as a terminus before which the Gītā must have been composed. The various and independent lines of investigation in the context of the subject matter of the Gītā, its style, its language, its versification, its opinions on sundry subjects of the highest importance, all point to the period earlier than the third century B.C. as the latest date at which it can have been composed. The text of the Bhagavad-Gītā has been preserved with religious care, and both Schlegel and Lassen declared it as their opinion that the present text is almost exactly in the condition in which it was when it left the hands of the author.

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Relationship with the Buddhist Texts & the New Testament :

The date of 'Bhagavad-Gītā' is also discussed in the context of its supposed relationship with the Buddhist text as also with the New Testament. The extreme view on this subject is that of Loynson³⁹ who holds that it was composed after Buddha, and several centuries after the commencement of the Christian era under the influence of the New Testament. Telang in the Introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā denies any Buddhist influence on it. According to him, the Gītā does not know anything Buddhistic, and it is equally ignorant

...of the Vedas (Vedas) were composed at a time not so remote from the time of the composition of the Gita, and at that period the Upanishads had not yet risen to the position of high importance which they afterwards commanded. (p. 10). The word Vedanta in Chapter XV of the Gita (75) is supposed to signify the Brahman. It is at the close of this epoch that the date of the Gita could be assigned. Wilson takes the second century B.C. as a terminus before which the Gita must have been composed. The various and independent lines of investigation in the context of the subject matter of the Gita, its style, its language, its verification, its opinions on sundry subjects of the highest importance, all point to the period earlier than the third century B.C. as the latest date at which it can have been composed. The text of the Bhagavad-Gita has been preserved with religious care, and both Schlegel and Lassen declared it as their opinion that the present text is almost exactly in the condition in which it was when it left the hands of the author.

Relationship with the Buddhist Texts

The date of Bhagavad-Gita is also discussed in the context of its supposed relationship with the Buddhist text as also with the New Testament. The extreme view on this subject is that of Lovinson who holds that it was composed after the first century B.C. and several centuries after the commencement of the Christian era under the influence of the New Testament. Wilson in the introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gita makes any Buddhist influence on it. According to him the

of the accepted Sāṅkhya philosophy as also the Yoga of Patañjali's Yoga-sūtra. This, together with some other secondary considerations, such as the non-identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa and the non-appearance of the vyūha doctrine, seems to be a very strong reason for holding the Gita to be in its general structure pre-Buddhistic.⁴⁰ Dasgupta further proposes that 'there is no other consideration which might lead us to think that the Gītā was written after the Brahma-sūtras, the verse Brahma-sūtra padaś caiva hetum viniścitaḥ which has to be treated either as an interpolation, or interpreted differently. Śāṅkara also thought that the 'Brahma-sūtra' referred to in the Gītā is an old sacred writing (Smṛiti), thus pointing to its earlier date.

As regards the influence of the New-Testament on the Gītā, relating to the borrowing of some of its materials from Christianity, it is held to be a mere fancy, and the hypothesis of Christian influence is unlikely on historical grounds.⁴¹ Further, according to Dasgupta,⁴² there is no definite evidence to show that it was post-Buddhistic and the Gītā does not contain the slightest reference to anything Buddhistic. Moreover, an examination of the Gītā from the point of view of language shows that it is archaic and largely un-Pāṇinian. He points to linguistic irregularities which might not determine anything definitely, might yet be regarded as contributory evidence in favour of the high antiquity of the Gītā. He suggests that the Gītā which summarised the older teachings of the Bhāgavata school was incorporated into the Mahābhārata during one of its revision by reason of the sacredness that it had attained at the time.⁴³ The ancient Bhāgavata, Sātvata or Pāncarātra sect devoted to the worship of Nārāyaṇa and his deified teaches, Kṛṣṇa-Devakī-putra, according to Tilak, dates

of the accepted Sankhya philosophy as also the Yoga of Patanjali's Yoga-sutra. This, together with some other secondary considerations, such as the non-identification of Vasudeva with Narayana and the non-appearance of the vyūha doctrine, seems to be a very strong reason for holding the Gita to be in its general structure pre-Buddhist. Dasgupta further proposes that there is no other consideration which might lead us to think that the Gita was written after the Brahma-sutra, the verse Brahma-sutra padas ajaya hetum vināśāya which has to be treated either as an interpolation, or interpreted differently. Sankara also thought that the Brahma-sutra referred to in the Gita is an old sacred writing (Śruti), thus pointing to its earlier date. As regards the influence of the New-Testament on the Gita, relating to the borrowing of some of its materials from Christianity, it is held to be a mere fancy, and the hypothesis of Christian influence is unlikely on historical grounds. Further, according to Dasgupta, there is no definite evidence to show that it was post-Buddhist and the Gita does not contain the slightest reference to anything Buddhist. Moreover, an examination of the Gita from the point of view of language shows that it is archaic and largely un-Palmyran. He points to linguistic irregularities which might not determine anything definitely, might yet be regarded as contributory evidence in favour of the high antiquity of the Gita. He suggests that the Gita which summarised the older teachings of the Bhagavata school was incorporated into the Mahabharata during one of its revision by reason of the sacredness of it had attained at the time. The ancient Bhagavata, Bhagavata and his

from a period long anterior to the rise of the Jainas in the eighth century B.C. There is no mention of Buddhism, though some of the views of the *Gītā* are closer to Buddhism. Both protest against the absolute authority of the Vedas and attempt to question the rigour of caste. Both manifest the same religious upheaval which shook the ritualistic religion. The *Gītā* denounces the religious madness of the hermits and the spiritual suicide of saints who, according to Radha_Krishna⁴⁴ prefer darkness to day light and sorrow to joy. The word nirvāṇa occurs in the *Gītā* only once (VI. 15), but this does not show any borrowing from Buddhism, since it is peculiar to it. In the description of the ideal man, the *Gītā* and Buddhism agree.⁴⁵ The *Gītā* is considered more complete than Buddhism as a philosophy and religion. It adopts the ethical principle of Buddhism but by implication condemns the negative metaphysics of Buddhism as the root of all unbelief and error.

Relationship with the Bhāgavatas and the Sāṅkya Philosophy :

Two other views relating to the date of the Bhāgavad-*Gītā* might as well be noticed here in the context of its relation with the school of the Bhāgavatas and the accepted Sāṅkya philosophy. The vyūha doctrine associated with the Bhāgavatas did not exist at the time of the *Gītā* and that it evolved gradually in later times. There were different variations of this doctrine and some accepted one vyūha, others two and still others three or four. Patañjali (2nd century B.C.) mentions only Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇaⁿ as the two vyūhas. The *Gītā* does not mention any one, and was in all probability the earliest work of the Ekāntin school of the Bhāgavatas. Nārāyaṇa is not mentioned in the *Gītā* and Vāsudeva is

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the only one in the text. He is identified with Viṣṇu, the chief⁴⁶ of the ādityas. According to R.G.Bhandarkar, the date of the 'Bhagavat-Gītā' which has no reference to the vyūha or personified form, is much earlier than the inscriptions, the Niddesa and Patañjali, i.e. it was composed not later than the beginning of the fourth century before the Christian era ; how much earlier it is difficult to say. At the time when the Gītā was conceived and composed the identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa had not yet taken place nor his incarnation of Viṣṇu came to be acknowledged.

Garbe on the date of the Gītā :

Garbe in his article entitled Bhagavad Gītā in the Encyclo-⁴⁷pedia of Religion and Ethics finds it difficult to determine the period of the composition of the work. In his words, 'we shall not, however, go materially wrong if we assign the composition of the original Gītā to the 2nd cent. B.C. its redaction to the 2nd century of our own era. He as well refers to the Buddhist influence being traced in the recommendation of the golden mean in Bk. VI. 16, 17 and the reference to nirvāṇa in the preceding verse. He, however, suggests that Buddhist influence must be regarded as very doubtful, or may at best be due to very distant and indirect sources. He, however, admits ^{that} ~~THAT~~ the author of the redaction being acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, but there are no grounds for regarding this view as ever probable, much less certain. No thought is found in the Gītā which may not be satisfactorily explained from the rich storehouse of ideas at the disposal of the Indian people or from their characteristic mental disposition.

The 'Bhagavad-Gītā' is quoted by Sanskrit scholars and writers in their works. Śāṅkara is the earliest commentator (8th cent. A.D.). In Kālidāsa's (5th cent.) Raghuvamśa, there is found a passage akin

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The Bhagavat-Gita is quoted by Sanskrit scholars and writers

to a Gītā's verse. Bāṇa (7th cent.) as well refers to the Gītā. Bhāsa in his Karmabhāra has a passage which reads like an echo of a verse from the Gītā. Bhāsa is generally assigned to the 2nd century B.C. Bodhāyana's Grihya Sūtras are familiar with Vāsudeva worship, and contain a statement attributed to the Lord (Bhagavan) which seems to be a quotation from the Bhagavad-Gītā. If Āpastamba belongs to the third century B.C., then Bodhāyana is earlier by a century or two. ⁴⁸ Radhakrishnan, therefore, assigns the Gītā to the fifth century B.C.

The Original Gītā according to Rudolf Otto :

Rudolf Otto in his work 'The Original Gita' - the Song of the Supreme Exalted one - Der Sang Des Hehr-Erhabenen, translated by J.E.Turner (1937) has distinguished what he regards as the original form of the ancient Hymn from later accretion. The present ⁴⁹ guise of the Bhagavad-Gītā, according to Otto, is not its original version and is actually based on a primitive text - The Original Gita - which itself was in no sense whatever specifically doctrinal writ, and therefore no Upanishad but simply a fragment of most magnificent epic narration. The Book is, in fact, embedded in the vast ancient Epic - The Mahābhārata (Book VI. Bhīṣmaparva Section 6) which has itself undergone the most diverse transformation, interpolations and perhaps even occasional abbreviations. Otto questions the view of Hill and Laṇṇottee in regarding it possible to maintain the unity of the Gītā. The original Gītā, according to him, is no doctrinal text, no doctrinal writ of Bhakti religion, but rather Kṛṣṇa's over-voice and deed, not to proclaim to Arjuna any transcendent dogma of salvation, but to make him undertake his responsibility as a Kṣatriya warrior. In his words, the third century B.C. is perhaps too low a limit for the original Gītā itself,

to a Gita's verse. Bang (7th cent.) as well refers to the Gita. Bangs in his *Kavyaprakasha* has a passage which reads like an echo of a verse from the Gita. Bang is generally assigned to the 7th century A.D. Bodhayan's *Gitika* Gita are familiar with Vasudeva worship, and contain a statement attributed to the lord (Bodhayan) which seems to be a quotation from the Bhagavad-Gita. It is assigned to the 7th century A.D., then Bodhayan is earlier by a century or two. Radhakrishnan, therefore, assigns the Gita to the 5th century B.C.

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while the individual treatise might have been effected very much later, and was presumably a rather prolonged process. Earlier H. Jacob had suggested that the doctrinal part of the Bhagavad-Gītā really ended with stanza II. 38. Otto proposed that the original poem continued after II. 37 with chapter eleven regarding in between, the first eight stanzas of chapter ten as they declare that Kṛṣṇa is himself the Supreme God-head. Nothing else intervened in the original Gītā.

Belvalkar's views on the date of Composition :

⁵⁰
Belvalkar, however, concludes that 'the so-called critical canons of Professor lets him down lamentably. He agrees with Tilak that the Gita teaches jñānamūlaka-bhakti pradhāna karmayoga - a life of activism grounded upon knowledge and centralised around the adoration of the Lord as the highest way to salvation. He suggests the triune-unity teaching of the Gita.⁵² Further, according to him, it would be doing gross injustice to the author of the poem to label it as an ill-assorted cabinet of opinions and precepts collected from the various systems of philosophy known in the day. The 'Bhagavad-Gītā' certainly draws upon diverse sources, but what it accepts from them, it tries to present as a coordinated and harmonious whole. Belvalkar does not wish to contest the possibility of the 'Bhagavad-Gītā' having one or more earlier and shorter forms, but at this distance of time it is well-nigh impossible to try and reach these 'original' and 'intermediate' forms. J. Charpentier,⁵³ according to Belvalkar, in his contribution in the Indian Antiquary for 1930 is frank enough to confess that such propositions could not be proved. To different minds they would possess 'a greater or lesser degree of verisimilitude'. He finally agrees with scholars like Dahlmann, Oetramare, Louis de la Vallie Poussin, Formichi and

While the individual treatise might have been effected very much later, and was presumably a rather prolonged process. Earlier H. Jacob had suggested that the doctrinal part of the Bhagavad-Gita really ended with stanza II. 32. Otto proposed that the original poem continued after II. 37 with chapter eleven regarding in between, the first eight stanzas of chapter ten as they declare that Krishna is himself the Supreme God-head. Nothing else intervened in the original Gita.

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others in holding that the Bhagavad-Gītā in its present form is not indeed a poem with a simple, unitary teaching, but a deliberate and well-formulated philosophical synthesis of views originally divergent, and propounded by more or less independent schools of thought, a synthesis undertaken by a master thinker who felt the urge for it in order to meet certain social, philosophical and religious situations that had threatened to become explosive. With such hypothesis at any rate we are more likely to do real justice to the poem than by a critical search after the illusory strata supposed to be imbedded therein, which has actually created more differences of views than those of the orthodox interpreters, commentators and bhāsyakāras.

The Bhagavad-Gītā nowhere refers to its graditional growth and some scholars have also traced certain alleged inconsistencies⁵³ and contradictory statements. These are assembled by Telang,⁵⁴ R. Garbe, Raus Otto and others as well which are believed to point to a progress in elaboration of the original form of the poem of (700 - 112) = 528 stanzas according to Garbe, of 133 according to Otto, and of a still smaller but unspecific number of stanzas according to Jacob, Hopkins and others, into an intermediate form (according to (12) twelve such forms could be detected ?), before⁵⁵ the work assumed its present, more or less stabilized form. The multiplicity and incompatibility of these searches or divings for the original Bhagavad-Gītā should teach us caution, in the words of Belvalkar. He traced in this an attempt to find the influence of the theistic New Testament in the formulation of the second stage of the evolution of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Many critics from Humbolt onwards as well thought of the impossibility of such a long poem being taught on the battle field at the time when the

two armies were arrayed to commence their fight (pravritte śastrasampāte).

Basham's Suggestions :

Basham in his posthumous work 'The Origin and Develop-⁵⁶ment of Classical Hinduism' suggests that there are atleast two strata in the final text. An analysis of the chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā shows that they fall into two groups. The first of these consists of chapters two (verse 38 to the end), three, five, six, eight, thirteen, fourteen (verses 38 to the end), sixteen, seventeen and eighteen (verses 1 to 53). Most of these chapters contain one or two verses in which Krishna refers to himself as the highest god, but their main tenor is philosophical, explaining the nature of the cosmos and the highest state, referred to generally as 'Brahman'. The theistic verses in these chapters are possibly the interpolations of a third author or compiler, who was responsible for chapters four, seven, nine, eleven, fourteen (verses 1 to 6 and 26) and seventeen (verse 54 to the end) which are passionately theistic.

The second stratum of the Bhagavad-Gītā, according to Basham, contains many very important passages that adumbrate some of the doctrines of later philosophical Hinduism. We are introduced to the doctrine of motiveless action, without caring for the results (2.47). One's deeds are to be appropriate to the norms of one's class and stages of life (varṇāśrama). This stratum, according to the late professor, also introduces the doctrine of the three guṇas or universal constituents, the system of mental and spiritual training known as yoga. The system of philosophy called Sāṅkhya, closely associated with Yoga, and the mystic absolute, Brahman. These are all mentioned in the Upanishads

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but with the exception of Brahman, they do not appear there in such detailed or developed form. The soul must strive to detect itself from all these gunas. The third stratum of the Bhagavad-Gītā is thoroughly theistic. It is the work of a literary genius who infused rather the pedestrian verses of much of the second stratum with a new life, intense and moving. He spread chapters and brief interpolations throughout the whole and gave it some degree of unity, despite his doctrines being diametrically opposed to those of the earlier passages. In this stratum, Kṛiṣṇa becomes the incarnation of Viṣṇu, the chief god and high god of the universe and from which all other entities, including Brahman, emanated. The new doctrine of avatāra - 'coming down', according to Basham, is the most important one. The first half of the eighteen and last chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā sums up the teaching of the text very explicitly within the frame work of a doctrine of desireless action, according to their specific duties on the basis of their class status and their gunas, dedicating all works to God. This enables people to train themselves in detachment and ultimately reach Brahman. According to Basham, ⁵⁷ once again, the chronology of the text presents great problems and cannot be established except very vaguely. The first part of the Bhagavad-Gītā suggests its composition at a time when the ethics of the warrior, glorifying righteous warfare and stressing the martial virtues, were being questioned. The whole of the Bhagavad-Gītā, according to him, is posterior to the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the fifth century B.C. He finally proposes that the Bhagavad-Gītā was complete in its final form not much later than c. 100 B.C.

Winternitz on the Gita :

The late friend Basham, despite his analysis of the data,

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has sought to put the old wine in new bottle. The unity of the Bhagavad-Gītā is stressed time and again. As Winternitz points out that the Bhagavad-Gītā is not a systematic philosophical book, but a mystical poem, and in the words of Franklin Edgerton, the most decided and consistent one.⁵⁸ It is poetic, mystical and devotional, rather than logical and philosophical. Further, quoting W. Von Humbolt, it is a sage speaking out of the fulness and inspiration of his knowledge and of his feeling, not a philosopher trained in a school. Classifying his material in accordance with a definite method and arriving at the last principle of his doctrine by a skilful chain work of ideas.⁵⁹ According to Winternitz, once again, despite all the contradictions the whole character of the work is predominantly theistic. God appears as an essentially personal god, who, as a teacher, and in human incarnation, requires devotion (bhakti) of his worshippers. In fact, the most conflicting philosophical doctrines and religious views are united in it, enabling adherents of all schools and sects to make use of it. It is on the strength of its poetic value, the forcefulness of its language, the splendor of images and metaphysics, the breadth of inspiration which pervades the poem, that according to Winternitz, it has made such a deep impression on impressionable minds of all ages.⁶⁰ The author of the poem weaves, as it were, a woof of many-coloured hues of thought.

The Anugītā :

Reference might as well be made here to the Anugītā⁶¹ or Secondary Gītā, a later interpolation. According to the late professor Basham, the additions to the original Gītā were made by atleast two hands. One of these was a philosopher of the upanisadic type interested in the ultimate impersonal Brahman, the

has sought to put the old wine in new bottle. The unity of the Bhagavad Gita is stressed time and again. As Wintemister points out that the Bhagavad Gita is not a systematic philosophical book, but a mystical poem, and in the words of Franklin Edgerton, the most decided and consistent one. It is poetic, mystical and revolutionary, rather than logical and philosophical. Further, quoting W. von Humboldt, it is a sage speaking out of the fulness of his knowledge and of his feeling, not a philosopher trained in a school. Classifying his material in accordance with a definite method and arriving at the last principle of his doctrine by a skilful chain work of ideas.

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Leading adherents of all schools and sects to make use of it. It is on the strength of its poetic value, the forcefulness of its language, the splendour of images and metaphysics, the breadth of inspiration which pervades the poem, that according to Wintemister, it has made such a deep impression on impressionable minds of all ages. The author of the poem weaves, as it were, a web of many-coloured hues of thought.

Reference might as well be made here to the Arundha or Bhagavad Gita, a later interpolation. According to the late Professor Gahan, the additions to the original Gita were made by at least two hands.

other was an impassioned theist, a devotee of Viṣṇu especially in his incarnation as Kriṣṇa-Vāsudeva. The later interpolation in the Mahābhārata, known as the Anugītā, occurs in the Seventeenth Book, the Āśvamedha Parvan, chapters sixteen to fifty-one. The background here is the peaceful atmosphere of the Pāṇḍava's palace and Kriṣṇa's visit to them. Here Arjuna seems to have forgotten the advice given by Kriṣṇa to Arjuna at the battle field. Kriṣṇa, therefore, advises once again but in the style of verse upanishads. He provides many references to Brahman, to the three universal constituents (guṇas) to early forms of Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophy, but there is none, according to Basham, to the practice of devotion (bhakti) or to Kriṣṇa's divinity. Yet the Anugītā which is longer than the Bhagavad-Gītā itself, purports to echo the doctrine of Bhakti. Telang fixes the third century A.D. as the latest date at which the Anugītā can have been composed.⁶² It may be taken with historical certainty to have been some centuries old in the time of the great Śāṅkarācārya. It is, however, abundantly clear that the Anugītā stands at a very considerable chronological distance from the Bhagavad-Gītā, but is certainly anterior to the Śāntanugītā. The name Anugītā suggests that the teachings contained in it are in accordance with those of the Gītā. The goal set forth by it is freedom from the cycle of birth, decay and death. Bondage arises from a sense of plurality and its consciousness causes the duality of pleasure and pain incidental to successive births and deaths. Freedom comes with the realization of unity for which buddhi - understanding - has to be trained on the lines of the guru-siṣya paramparā.

A general Survey :

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reference to its importance, relevance, religion and philosophy, its age and authorship and many connected problems, it has been possible to highlight all these aspects in their proper setting. At the time of the Gītā there were different views about ultimate reality and man's destiny. The Upanisadic tradition based on the intuition of the soul, the Sāṅkhya doctrine offering liberation by freedom from contact with nature, the Karma-Mīmāṃsā view of conforming to one's specified duties for attaining perfection, and the devotional path of achieving exaltation of the heart, were accepted as paths to attain freedom from bondage. The Yoga system declared that man could be free when the quiet life of the soul replaces the varied hues of the material world. The Supreme and Ultimate spirit was viewed as an impersonal absolute or a personal lord.

The Bhagavad-Gītā attempts to integrate the heterogenous elements, fusing them all into a single whole. That explains for the presence of conflicting views about the end of freedom and the means of discipline. The two doctrines - the theistic and the ^pantheistic are integrated together. Further, the two beliefs are treated on par and is represented as a lower exoteric order in comparison to the otherone. It is no where proposed that theism is a preliminary step to the knowledge of the reality or that the pantheism of the Vedānta is the ultimate reality itself. In fact the Gītā adopts the idealism of the Upanisads to a theistically minded people. It shows that the reflective spiritual idealism of the Upanisads could fit in the living warm religion of personal devotee. Thus, the change of emphasis is from the speculative to the practical, from the philosophical to the religious. The Gītā, thus, attempts a spiritual synthesis, supporting life and

reference to its importance, relevance, religion and philosophy, its age and authorship and many connected problems, it has been possible to highlight all these aspects in their proper setting. At the time of the Gita there were different views about ultimate reality and man's destiny. The Upanishadic tradition based on the intuition of the soul, the Sankhya doctrine offering liberation by freedom from contact with nature, the Karma-Mimamsa view of conforming to one's specified duties for attaining perfection, and the devotional path of achieving exaltation of the heart, were accepted as paths to attain freedom from bondage. The Yoga system declared that man could be free when the quiet life of the soul replaces the varied hues of the material world. The Supreme and Ultimate spirit was viewed as an impersonal absolute or a personal lord.

The Bhagavad-Gita attempts to integrate the heterogeneous elements, fusing them all into a single whole. That explains for the presence of conflicting views about the end of freedom and the means of discipline. The two doctrines - the theistic and the nontheistic are integrated together. Further, the two beliefs are treated on par and is represented as a lower exoteric order in comparison to the otherone. It is no where proposed that there is a preliminary step to the knowledge of the reality or that the pantheism of the Vedanta is the ultimate reality itself. In fact the Gita adopts the idealism of the Upanishads to a theistic and personally minded people. It shows that the reflective spiritual idealism of the Upanishads could fit in the living warm religion of personal devoted. Thus, the change of emphasis is from the speculative to the practical, from the philosophical to the religious.

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The central purpose of the Gītā is to solve the problem of life and stimulate right conduct. It is primarily an ethical treatise, a yoga-śāstra as the colophon at the end of each chapter describes it. The Yoga of the Gītā is very much practical, harnessing all the forces of heart, mind and will to God. Yoga here means the discipline by which we could train ourselves to cushion the shocks of the world with our soul being unaffected. The emotions are disciplined to realise the supreme by complete surrender to God. The Yoga-śāstra of the Gītā is rooted in the knowledge of the spirit, called brahma-vidyā. The Gītā is an intellectual search for truth as well as an attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man. It is aptly called 'brahma-vidyā nām yogaśāstra - the yogaśāstra or 'religious discipline of the philosophy of Brahman'. It would be best to conclude in the words of Warren Hastings in his letter to Nathaniel Smith, Chairman of the Court of Directors; 'with the deductions or rather qualifications, which I have thus premised, I hesitate not to pronounce the Geeta 'a performance of great originality; of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction almost unequalled, and single exception among all the known religions of mankind'. It was advertised as 'the antiquity of the original, and the veneration in which it hath been held for many ages, by a very considerable portion of the human race, must render it one of the greatest curiosities ever presented to the literary world.

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'These writings, in the words of Warren Hastings, 'will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance'.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. There are several landmarks in a survey of the literature of the Bhagavad-Gita. A detailed account of the manuscripts, editions and translations of the Text together with Indian classical commentators, as also expositions by European scholars is provided by R. Garbe in his article entitled 'The Bhagavad Gita' in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (Vol. II. pp. 539) 1908. Earlier Adolf Holtzmann in his Das Mahābhārata und seine Teile, Vol. II. 1893. pp. 121-153, noticed the literature available on the Gita till that year. The next landmark is Paul Hubert - Histoire de la Bhagavad-Gita des diverses éditions de 1795 à nos jours. Paris. 1949. The last study is J.C. Kapoor - Bhagavad-Gita, An International Bibliography of 1785-1979. Inprints New York and London Garland. Publishing Ins. 1983. As pointed out by R. Garbe, 'no year has passed since the appearance of this volume in which there have not been further Indian contributions to this literature'. This is more true now, and applies both to Indian and foreign contributions. Among the notable recent one's may be mentioned the Text and Translation editions of S. Radha Krishnan, London. 1948, F. Edgerton (Cambridge, Massachu - Satts. 1944), Zachner, R.C. Oxford 1969. An analytical study by Radha Krishnan in his History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I. Oxford 1923, pp. 518-580, 'a survey of the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita by S.N. Dasgupta - ibid, Cambridge. 1922, Vol. II, pp. 437-552 ; and that by M.M. Hiriyanna in his Outlines of Indian Philosophy. London. 1978 are extremely helpful and relevant for the present study.
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8. ibid. p. 126.
9. ibid. p. 238.
10. Garbe. Introduction. Op.cit. William Von Humboldt as well suggests that it is 'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue'. (quoted by Radhakrishnan. Indian Philosophy. Vol. I. p. 51-91.

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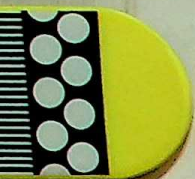
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22. See ERB. VI. 243-306.
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CHAPTER II

THE CLASSICAL COMMENTATORS

The Gītā is aptly described as the labyrinth of interpretations. Scholars through the ages have used it either as a base or a supporting column for raising the structure of their philosophical view points. Its apparently contradictory notions and supposed interpolations provide conjectural theories and interpretations. Its raw material has been fruitfully utilised by the commentators - past and present, classical and formal, oriental and occidental in projecting their theories about God and Man, salvation and suffering, freedom and bondage and the different paths of deliverance through knowledge, action and devotion. The Gītā has been associated with so many ancient philosophies and so many current conjectures that it becomes difficult to arrive at any accepted hypothesis. One is therefore free to draw one's conclusions taking into account the interpretations of different scholars on the subject matter of the Gītā and its message. Is it the word of the God Incarnate as the pious devotee believes ? Is it the remodelling of a pantheistic poem to suit theistic ideals or a vedantic revision of a theistic poem ? In terms of philosophical reckoning is it an advaita, a visistadvaita, or dvaita or a śuddhadvaita work ? Does it propound Karmayoga, Jñāna Yoga or Bhakti yoga separately or integrates all the three in due proportion and importance ? Is it an old versed Upanisad worked into the Gītā by Krishnaism ? A chain of scholars from the West suggest that the Gītā, like most Hindu works, has been interpolated injudiciously and that accounts for many of the puzzling anomalies, and philosophical inconsistencies. ¹ Edgerton

THE GITA

The Gita is aptly described as the laboratory of interpretations. Scholars through the ages have used it either as a base or a supporting column for testing the structure of their philosophical view points. Its apparently contradictory notions and opposed interpretations provide conjectural theories and interpretations. Its raw material has been fruitfully utilised by the commentators - east and west, classical and formal, oriental and occidental in projecting their theories about God and Man, salvation and suffering, freedom and bondage and the different paths of deliverance through knowledge, action and devotion. The Gita has been associated with so many ancient philosophies and so many current conjectures that it becomes difficult to arrive at any accepted hypothesis. One is therefore free to draw one's conclusions taking into account the interpretations of different scholars on the subject matter of the Gita and its message. Is it the word of the God incarnate to the pious devotee believer? Is it the remodeling of a metaphysical poem to suit theistic ideals or a vedantic revision of a theistic poem? In terms of philosophical reasoning is it an advaita, a visistadvaita, or dvaita or a suddhadvaita? Does it propound Karmayoga, Jñāna Yoga or Bhakti Yoga? Does it integrate all the three in due proportion and precedence? Is it an old versed dogma worked into the Gita or a new creation? A chain of scholars from the west has held that the Gita, like most Hindu works, has been interpreted in a way of the Gita.

explains² that the apparent contradictions lie in the mystic nature of the work. The Gītā is equally considered as a practical work, and so far as practical teaching is concerned there is no ambiguity. The reason for this is the setting of the poem.³ This important element in the conception of the poem would lose its entire significance if we did not regard action as its essential lesson. The fundamental teaching of the Gītā is not the identity of God and God-head or of Ātman-Brahman, but that a man should follow his enjoined duties without any motive of self-interest or gratification of sense - desire.⁴ In trying to resolve Arjuna's moral dilemma, Kṛiṣṇa had to bring in philosophical and metaphysical issues as well in discussion, besides impressing on him the duty of a Kṣatriya warrior. Finally Kṛiṣṇa asked Arjuna to put his faith on Him and fight which he did.

There are no doubt apparent contradictions in the Gītā. According to some scholars they are real rather than apparent, while others take it as more apparent than real. The Gītā text is described on the one hand as an ill-assorted cabinet⁵ of primitive philosophical opinions and on the other hand as the most systematic scriptural statement of the Perennial Philosophy.⁶ The apparent contradictions within the text can, however, be reconciled in the work itself by proper interpretation and real insight in the situation. In the words of Arvind Sharma,⁷ it is neither a patch work quilt nor a variegated tapestry. It is rather a stuff like fine yarn from which different patterns may be woven from time to time, and which spiritual aspirants have woven into the very fine texture



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Classical Commentators on the Gītā :
Bhāskara :

The earliest commentator is said to be Bhāskara. The date of this commentator is uncertain. Some scholars place him earlier than Śāṅkara while others accord him a later position. Arvind Sharma in his 'Hindu Gītā'⁸ places him earlier for logical rather than chronological reason. Śāṅkara, according to him, belongs to the famous triad of the ācāryas, along with Rāmānuja and Mādhava and as such needs consideration in that context. Bhāskara did not write a complete commentary but only on the first nine chapters. These are considered under textual, polemical, liturgical and philosophical aspects. He interprets the message of the Gītā in a way different from others. According to him, the upholders of the jñāna alone view, probably referring to Śāṅkara, misconstrue upanisadic passages.⁹ Libertⁿation, in his words, results from knowledge along with karma, and not by knowledge alone (Kārmāsapeksaj jñānam muktiv na kevalad ity abhiprayah). He is firm in his view that non-abandonment of action even by those who are jñānins or would be jñānnis, is not possible, as is evident from his comment on Bhagavad-Gītā III. 4 (na ca samnyāsanād eva siddhim samādhigacchati). Further, Bhāskara considers Viṣṇu as the primary god. He is not like any other god but is the root of the entire universe and the overlord of other gods like Brahma, Rudra, Indra etc. (samastasya jagato mūlakaranam īśvaranam brahma-rudrendrā dinam apy adhīśvaro¹⁰ yam).



Śāṅkara and his Vedantism : ¹¹

In the annals of Indian Brahmanic philosophy Śāṅkara stands supreme for exercising greatest influence on Hindu thought in general. His name is a household word even to this day. ¹² Trees of his philosophical thought are unmistakably perceptible even at present, despite the existence of a number of rival systems of Hindu philosophy whose main aim was to controvert his doctrine. The date of this Namudri Brāhmaṇa from Kerala is fixed at A.D. 788 on the basis of the year of his birth given in a manuscript, ¹² Many legends of miraculous powers and fabulous incidents are associated with Śāṅkara's life. His biographers Mādhavacharya and Ānandgiri have provided such accounts of his intellectual conquests in their respective works Śāṅkaradiḡvijaya and Śāṅkara-vijaya. He is deified by them as an incarnation of the god Śiva for putting an end to Buddhists and dualists, and establishing the supremacy of Brahmanical religion and philosophy. The encounters of Śāṅkara with the contemporary rivals of other systems of philosophy, particularly Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Maṇḍanamisra, an ardent exponent of Mīmāṃsā are annaled in the biographical texts. The great object of Śāṅkara's labour was the revival of the system of religion and philosophy taught in the Upanishads. For this he wrote many works and carried on dialectical controversies throughout the country and succeeded in putting down the heterodox systems and establishing the doctrine of absolute monism. He established four maṭhas or seats of religion at the four ends of India.- the Śringerimaṭha on the Śringeri hills in the south, the Śāradāmaṭha at Dwarka in the west, the Jyotirmatha at Badrik-āśrama in the north, and the Govardhanamaṭha at Puri in the

Shankara and his Vedantism

In the annals of Indian Brahminical philosophy Shankara stands supreme for exercising greatest influence on Hindu thought in general. His name is a household word even to this day. Ideas of his philosophical thought are undeniably philosophical even at present, despite the existence of a number of rival systems of Hindu philosophy whose aim was to

contravert his doctrine. The date of this Bharatī Brahmin from Kerala is fixed at A.D. 750 on the basis of the year of his birth given in a manuscript. Many legends of miraculous powers and fabulous incidents are associated with Shankara's life. His biographers Mahavacharya and Mandana have provided such accounts of his intellectual conquests in their respective

works Shankarabodhisattva and Shankaravijaya. He is credited by them as an incarnation of the god Shiva for putting an end to Brahminical religion and philosophy. The encounters of Shankara with the contemporary rivals of other systems of philosophy, particularly Kumarācārya and Mahendācārya, an ardent exponent of Vishāva are narrated in the biographical texts. The great object of Shankara's labours was the revival of the system of religion and philosophy taught in the Upanishads. For this he wrote many works and carried on dialectical controversies throughout the country and succeeded in putting down the heterodox

doctrines and establishing the doctrine of absolute monism. He formulated four maxims or seals of religion at the four ends of the earth. The Śringerī Matha on the Śringerī hills in the south, the Advaita Matha at Banāras in the west, the Vyākṛānta Matha at

Madurai in the south, and the Śringerī Matha at Śringerī in the north are the four great centres of the Advaita system. The great object of Shankara's labours was the revival of the system of religion and philosophy taught in the Upanishads. For this he wrote many works and carried on dialectical controversies throughout the country and succeeded in putting down the heterodox

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east, each having a sanyasin from another end as its pontif.

Śāṅkara's commentary on the Brahmasūtra, which, apart from its philosophical value, is a masterpiece as a literary product. He also wrote commentaries on the ten principal Upanisads and on the Bhagavad-Gītā, the two other pratisthānas of the Vedas. His main object was to show that the upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā contain no doctrine but absolute monism. He also wrote commentaries on the Viṣṇu-Sahasraṇāma and Saṅat-sujātiya, both prakaraṇas from the Mahābhārata. Several independent works dealing with the principal topics of the Vedānta doctrine attributed to him are Vivekacudāmaṇi, Upadeśasahasri, Aparokṣambhūti, Ātmabodha, Dasasloki, Mohanudgara, and many minor works, such as strotra in praise of Viṣṇu, Devī and other deities.

The term Vedānta usually associated with Śāṅkara's name and explained in his commentary on the Upanisads and the Gita, is as well associated with the philosophical doctrines of several others who followed Śāṅkara, namely Rāmānuja, Vallabha-chārya, Mādhava and others. The different schools of Vedantism are named after them. The name which distinguishes the doctrine of Śāṅkara is 'Kevalādvaita' or absolute non-duality. It is briefly explained in the well-known line : Brahma-satyam jagan-mithyā jīvo Brahmaiva nāparah - 'Brahmā' or the supreme spirit is real ; the world is unreal ; the individual self is only the Supreme Self, and no other. Only intelligence (chaitanya) which is without form, without qualities, without any limitation of time, space or causality, is real, phenomenal erroneously superimposed on the self-existing, self-refulgent intelligence.

...each having a commentary on the Upanishads, which, apart from the philosophical value, is a masterpiece as a literary product. He also wrote commentaries on the ten principal Upanishads and on the Bhagavad-Gita, the two other great classics of the Vedas. His main object was to show that the Bhagavad-Gita contains no doctrine but absolute monism. He also wrote commentaries on the Vishnu-Sahasranama and Sarada-Sulabha, both stotras from the Mahabharata. Several independent works dealing with the principal topics of the Vedanta doctrine attributed to him are Vivekachudamani, Govardhana, Anantashloka, Shikha, Prasanna, Prasanna, Prasanna, and many minor works, such as stotra in praise of Vishnu, Govind and other deities.

The term Vedanta usually associated with Shankara's name and explained in his commentary on the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, is as well associated with the philosophical doctrines of several others who followed Shankara, namely Ramanuja, Vedantadeva, Madhva, Madhva and others. The different schools of Vedanta named after them. The name which distinguishes the doctrine of Shankara is 'Kevaladvaita', or absolute non-duality. It is chiefly explained in the well-known line: brahma-satyam jagan-mithya jivo brahmanya namarup - Brahman or the supreme spirit is real; the world is unreal; the individual self is only the supreme self, and no other. Only intelligence (chaitanya) which is without form, without qualities, without any limitation of space or causality, is real, phenomenal erroneously ascribed on the self-existing, self-reliant intelligence.

Thus, according to Śāṅkara, the unity of the Brahman or the supreme-self is absolute without the slightest test of plurality, which can only belong to the ephemeral and the empirical world. Of course, we see many in us and around us, and how this plurality by which we are surrounded and which we cannot get rid of, be reconciled with the unity of the Brahman ? Śāṅkara solves this question by bringing in the principle of māyā or illusion. Thus, his doctrine has two aspects, esoteric and exoteric in the context of theology, cosmology or psychology. The principle of illusion seeks to cut as under all kinds of opposition.

14

Brahman - its meaning :

Esoterically the Brahman is knowledge or realization itself, non-qualified, absolutely incapable of change, unknowable, indescribable, unique, nothing but existence, intelligence and bliss - the parā or nirguna Brahman. Exoterically, in a wider context, the Brahman is qualified, possessed of an infinite number of auspicious attributes, capable of producing the world from itself and of reabsorbing it into itself. In short, it is Īśvara or God - the aparā or saguna Brahman. According to Śāṅkara, there is not a single creator once for all, but that the world in great periods is created and reabsorbed by Brahman, and this succession of creation and re-absorption lasts from eternity and no creation is first. This never-ceasing creation is a moral necessity. As the sprout from the seed which grows from a previous sprout, so on does the world move.

The world an illusion :

The manifold world, however, is only an illusion (māyā),

...the unity of the Brahman on the
 ...self is absolute without the slightest touch of duality.
 ...which can only belong to the ephemeral and the empirical
 ...Of course, we see many in us and around us, and how
 ...this duality by which we are surrounded and which we cannot
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 ...or illusion. Thus, his doctrine has two aspects, esoteric and
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14

Brahman - its meaning :

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 is a moral necessity. As the sprout from the seed which grows
 from a previous sprout, so on does the world move.

The world an illusion :

The world an illusion (maya)

a mirage (mrigatrisṇā) - a dream, and the reality is to be attained not by reasoning (tarka) but by introspective realization (anubhava). It becomes necessary to return from this variegated world to the innermost recesses of one's soul and become aware of a reality, a timeless, spaceless, changeless reality. This was accepted centuries back by Plato who called this world 'as one of shadow and not of realities, and by Kant to whom the world is an appearance only and not the thing-in-itself.¹⁵ The jīva or the individual soul is Brahman, or the supreme spirit itself, and totally possessed of eternity, omnipresence, omniscience etc., but these divine qualities are hidden in the soul as the fire is hidden in the wood and will appear only after the final deliverance. Brahman itself, which is one and limitless, appears as the jīva, limited and multiple, owing to its being conditioned by māyā. The individual souls are limited in size and qualities, infinite in number, one for each body. The cause of this concealment of their divine nature is the external adjuncts which condition them (upādhi), such as the mind (manas), the sense organs (indriyāṇi) and the vital airs (prāṇaḥ) which constitute the subtle body (sūkṣmāśarīra). This whole psychological apparatus along with karma accompanies the soul in all its ways of migration without essentially changing its divine nature. These upādhis are of course only part of the phenomenal world because of the innate avidyā or ignorance.

16

Vedānta and the three-fold division of Persons:

The Vedānta admits of a threefold division of persons - those who perform good deeds, sacrifices etc., follow the path of the fathers (pitri-yāna) and are born again ; those who worship the qualified Brahman or Īśvara, follow the path of gods (devayāna)

attained not by reasoning (tanu) but by introspective realization (anubhava). It becomes necessary to return from this vulgarized world to the innermost recesses of one's soul and become aware of a reality, a timeless, spaceless, changeless reality. This was accepted centuries ago by Plato who called this world 'as one of shadow and not of reality', and he said to whom the world is an appearance only and not the thing-in-itself. The live or the individual soul is brahman, or the supreme spirit itself, and totally possessed of eternality, omniscience, omnipotence etc., but these divine qualities are hidden in the soul as the fire is hidden in the wood and will appear only after the final deliverance. Brahman itself, which is one and limitless, appears as the live, limited and multiple, owing to its being conditioned by maya. The individual souls are limited in size and qualities, infinite in number, one for each soul. The cause of this concealment of their divine nature is the external adjuncts which condition them (gunas), such as the mind (manas), the sense organs (indriyas) and the vital airs (pranas) which constitute the subtle body (liṅga). This whole psychological apparatus along with karma accompanies the soul in all its ways of migration without essentially changing its divine nature. These gunas are of course only part of the phenomenal world because of the anna evam or ignorance.

The Vedanta admits of a threefold division of persons - those who perform good deeds, sacrifices etc., follow the path

and are on their way to final deliverance ; and those who are evil doers, a third place (trīṭya-sṭhāna). In this context, the only reality is Brahman and its knowledge itself is mokṣa. According to Śāṅkara, there are three principal sources of knowledge - pratyakṣa or sensuous perception ; anumāna or reasoning and śabda or word. Of these three śabda is the most important while pratyakṣa and anumāna play only a secondary role. By śabda is meant revelation or śruti, represented by the samhitas, Brāhmaṇas and the Upanisads which refer to knowledge and form the jñānakāṇḍa. The highest object of Vedānta is to prove that there is only one reality, namely Brahman and scripture is the principal source of knowledge with regard to Brahman. Reasoning (anumāna) is allowed only to conform with scripture in this context. Further, individual souls are partially bound by their former acts and are equally free to better or worsen their lots. They are clothed in their conditioning adjuncts (upādhis). The doctrine of Karma furnishes the principal moral element of the vedānta. The entire world is the result of acts in this or in former life and his future life entirely depends on his present acts and performance. A man who suffers is only paying off a debt or setting up the capital for another life. A man who enjoys his wealth and health is made to feel that he is spending his hoardings and he has therefore to make up the loss by new efforts.

17

Two kinds of Knowledge and Mokṣa :

Śāṅkara as well refers to two kinds of knowledge and two kinds of mokṣa, corresponding to the two-fold distinction of Brahman, higher and lower, owing to maya or the two kinds

and are on their way to final deliverance; and those who are
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 the principal moral element of the Vedānta. The entire world
 is the result of acts in this or in former life and his future
 life entirely depends on his present acts and consequences. A
 man who suffers is only paying off a debt or settling up the
 account of another life. A man who enjoys his wealth and
 power is able to feel that he is spending his money and
 is therefore to make up the loss by new efforts.

Brahman as well refers to the state of knowledge and
 Moksha, corresponding to the two-fold distinction
 of knowledge and Moksha.

of reality absolute and relative. The higher knowledge is the absolute unity of Brahman apart from which nothing really is. The higher mokṣa which arises simultaneously from such a knowledge consists in the complete absorption of the individual soul into Brahman, a revival of its true nature. The lower knowledge consists in the worship or upāsanā of the lower Brahman, conceived as a personal lord and Creator Īśvara. This upāsanā is obligatory on all who have yet to attain the highest knowledge. This is only a preparation, rather a second class mukṭi which gradually leads to complete deliverance or highest mukṭi. Sāṅkara thus allowed idols as symbols of the great Infinite for those who cannot raise themselves to the comprehension of the One, changeless, non-qualified Brahman.

Knowledge alone leads to Mokṣa :

According to this great Vedāntist, knowledge and knowledge alone can lead to mokṣa which is nothing but a realisation of our real nature, of which we can never be deprived, but of which we have been only forgetful. As such, it is only knowledge that can be the means of mokṣa. The performance of actions, however, and the practice of moral virtues are allowed only as being preparatory to knowledge. Good works if performed from pure motives and without expectation of any reward form an excellent preparation for reaching that highest knowledge imparted by the Vedānta. The person qualified for the study of Vedānta has studied the Vedas and the Vedānta, with his spirit entirely purified by the performance of the obligatory, occasional and expiatory acts and by the avoidance of all interested and forbidden acts. He has tranquillity of spirit, sense of discrimination between ~~and~~ right



the absolute unity of Brahman apart from which nothing really exists. The higher knowledge is not a knowledge which arises simultaneously from such a knowledge consists in the complete absorption of the individual soul into Brahman, a revival of the true nature. The lower knowledge consists in the worship of personality of the lower Brahman, conceived as a personal lord and Creator Ishta. This Ishta is obligatory on all who have yet to attain the highest knowledge. This is only a preparation, rather a second class Ishta which gradually leads to complete deliverance or highest Ishta. Ishta thus Ishta leads as a symbol of the great Infinite for those who cannot raise themselves to the comprehension of the One, changeless, non-dualised Brahman.

Knowledge alone leads to Moksha :

According to this great Vedantist, knowledge and knowledge alone can lead to Moksha which is nothing but a realisation of our real nature, of which we can never be deprived, but of which we have been only forgetful. As such, it is only knowledge that can be the means of Moksha. The performance of actions, however, and the practice of moral virtues are allowed only as being preparatory to knowledge. Good works if performed from pure motives and without expectation of any reward form an excellent preparation for reaching that highest knowledge imparted by the Vedanta. The person qualified for the study of Vedanta has studied the Vedanta, with his spirit entirely purified by the performance of the obligatory, occasional and expiatory acts and by the avoidance of all Ishta acts. Vedanta from

and wrong, quiscence, endurance, concentration of mind, and faith with a longing of freedom from bondage. With the attainment of the knowledge of the highest Brahman, all works whether good or bad, fall away.

Tat-tvam-asi - interpretation : ¹⁸

Sankara equally interprets the well-known formula tat-tvam-asi (lit. Thou art that) by identifying the individual soul with the supreme self. Tat, according to him, means the Brahman with omniscience, absence of limitations ; tvam literally means the jīva or the individual self, with limited knowledge, powers etc. and the copula asi signifies the apposition (samānādhikaranya) of these two.

Jīva, Brahman and Māya :

Sankara in his Bhāṣya on the Gītā does not ignore his central stand on identification of Jīva and Brahman and the illusory world (mrigatṛiṣṇā). He no doubt evaluates separately the different aspects of spiritual life - karma, yoga and bhakti for the realization of Truth. This is done in the context of release from bondage. He assesses the importance of Karma-yoga in one's life and its relation with the higher phases of expression in spiritual life. These are categorised in many stages or expressions, such as karma, the method of discipline in the social set up and its results in life after death, as an obligatory part of duty, as an inward spiritual discipline and as the waking up of the will for the service of mankind (lokasamgraha). In his general philosophical outlook he does not lay much emphasis on karma but on knowledge. He does not commend on karma as a proper method of realisation of

Truth. Nevertheless it is taken as a force of social adjustment and as a method of spiritual expression, spiritual uplift and effective spiritual inspiration. He emphasises on the performance of one's enjoined duty as a prelude to entry into spiritual life with the effective movement of will power without any craving for earthly attraction and satisfaction. It provides a new meaning and a new light and is helpful for the spiritual formation of the will to attain the higher stage towards the realization of Truth.

Śāṅkara holds that while action is essential for the purification of the mind, when wisdom is attained action falls away.¹⁹ In fact, wisdom and action are opposites as light and darkness. As such, he rejects the view of jñāna-karma-samuccaya 'amalgam of Knowledge and Action'. He believes that the Vedic rites are meant for those who are lost in ignorance and desire. The aspirants for salvation should renounce the performance of ritual works. The aim of the Gītā, according to Śāṅkara, is the complete suppression of the world of becoming in which all action occur, though his own life is an illustration of activity²⁰ carried on after the attainment of wisdom. An examination of the parts of Śāṅkara's commentary where he enriches or seems to depart from the plain meaning of the text, or where he seems to adjust the ~~semantics~~ ^{semantics} to suit his own philosophical predispositions, might be out of place here. His comments could be considered only on relevant occasions.

Knowledge and Abandonment of Action :²¹

The two basic elements of Śāṅkara's philosophical system are that salvation is possible only through jñāna and that jñāna

Knowledge and Abandonment of Action :

is characterised by the abandonment of action. Both these aspects find clear articulation in due his Gītābhāṣya. He does not regard jñāna as characterised by the abandonment of the fruits of action but by action itself.²² As such, salvation is achieved by the pre-eminent renunciation of all works - (mukyaḥ sarva karma sanyāsaḥ). Further, salvation is not possible as long as the slightest trace of the fruits of action remains to be exhausted. Since action and its fruit are coterminus, it is difficult to ignore the latter, which would certainly stand in the way of salvation. For an action done, whether interested (kāmya) or obligatory (nitya) there is bound to be its effect and it cannot lead to mokṣa or salvation. According to Śāṅkara, he who has acquired a knowledge of the self should resort to renunciation only, not to works. The jñānin may appear to be acting outwardly with the movement of the body and the senses but in reality only inaction in action.

Śāṅkara's interpretation of the Gītā presupposes that the Gītā holds the same philosophical doctrine that he does.²³ His method of interpretation, according to S.N.Das Gupta, is based not so much on a comparison of textual passage, as simply on the strength of the reasonableness of the exposition of a view which can be consistently held according to his Vedānta philosophy, and which he ascribes to the Gītā. This is equally true in the case of other commentators as well. Their commentaries on the Gītā were in support of their own traditions (sampradāya) and in refutation of those of others. They were able to find in the Gītā their own system of thought and metaphysics. In fact the author of the Gītā suggests that they are eternal truths which we are all seeking.

is characterised by the abandonment of action. Both these aspects find clear articulation in the *Gita*. It does not regard Jñāna as characterised by the abandonment of the fruits of action but by action itself. As such, salvation is achieved by the pre-eminence renunciation of all works. *Samanyo jñāna karmā sanyasāḥ*. Further, salvation is not possible as long as the slightest trace of the fruits of action remains to be exhausted. Since action and its fruits are ever-present, it is difficult to ignore the latter, which would certainly stand in the way of salvation. For an action done, whether interested (*karma*) or obligatory (*dharma*) there is bound to be its effect and it cannot lead to *mokṣa* or salvation. According to Śaṅkara, he who has acquired a knowledge of the self should resort to renunciation only, not to works. The *Jñāna* way seems to be acting outwardly with the movement of the body and the senses but in reality only inaction in action. Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *Gita* presupposes that the *Gita* holds the same philosophical doctrine that he uses. His method of interpretation, according to S. S. Das Gupta, is based not so much on a comparison of textual passages, as simply on the strength of the reasonableness of the exposition of a view which can be consistently held according to his Vedānta philosophy, and which he ascribes to the *Gita*. This is equally true in the case of other commentators as well. Their commentaries on the *Gita* were in support of their own traditions (*śāstra*) and in refutation of those of others. They were able to find in the *Gita* their own system of thought and metaphysics. In fact the author of the *Gita* suggests that they are

24

Anandagiri and other commentators on Śāṅkara :

Sankar's views are developed by Ānandagiri who is probably as late as the thirteenth century, Śrīdhara (A.D. 1400) and Madhusudana (16th century) among others. Ānandagiri wrote a commentary on Śāṅkara's Bhagavad-Gīta-bhāṣya called Bhagavad-Gītā Bhāṣya-Vivarana and Rāmānanda wrote another commentary on that of Śāṅkara, called Bhagavadgītā-bhāṣya-vyākhyā. He is also said to have written another work on the Gīta called Gītā-Sāya.²⁵ Another namesake Ānanda (Vardhana) (A.D. 1680) from Kashmir wrote his Ānandavardhinī metaphysically grounding it on the Śaiva Tantrism as current in that part of the country from the days of Abhinavagupta onwards. Here the Bhagavad-Gita is compared to the Vitastā, which by its pure placid stream washes off all impurities and bears testimony to the truth of the doctrine that knowledge, in combination with action, achieves salvation. He expatiates on the merits in jñāna-karma samuccaya -²⁶ knowledge and action coordination theory. As pointed out earlier Śāṅkara refuses to accept such a continuous and unbroken alliance till the end. A samuccaya, according to the great Vedantist, is possible only where the two factors are equipotent (tulyābala) and are regarded from start to finish as equally indispensable in the production of the final result. A man of knowledge, according to Śāṅkara, cannot also be a man of action. Incidentally if there be persons like Janaka, who even in jīvana mukha continue to be engaged in action, it could be only a reflex occasioned by that unspent energy, or merely a wish not to disturb social responsibilities.

After Śāṅkara there seems to have been some lull, followed

Bhakti and other commentaries on Bhakti.
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 commentary on Bhakti, called Bhakti-Viveka.
 He is also said to have written another work on the Bhakti called
 Bhakti-Viveka. Another namesake Bhakti (15th century).
 Bhakti wrote his Bhakti-Viveka on the Bhakti.
 It is on the Bhakti as current in that part of the country
 from the days of Bhakti-Viveka onwards. Here the Bhakti-Viveka
 is compared to the Bhakti, which by the pure Bhakti stream
 washes off all impurities and bears testimony to the truth of
 the doctrine that knowledge, in combination with action, achieves
 salvation. He expatiates on the merits of Bhakti-Viveka.
 knowledge and action coordination theory. As pointed out
 earlier Bhakti refuses to accept such a continuous and unbroken
 alliance till the end. A Bhakti, according to the great
 Bhakti, is possible only where the two factors are equated
 (Bhakti) and are regarded from start to finish as equally
 indispensable in the production of the final result. A man of
 Bhakti, according to Bhakti, cannot also be a man of action.
 Bhakti if there be persons like Bhakti, who even in Bhakti
 continue to be engaged in action, it could be only a
 Bhakti occasioned by that unspent energy, or merely a wish not
 to disturb social responsibilities.

a few centuries later by two commentaries, one in prose and another in verse by two persons of the same name Yāmuṇācārya. This prose commentary called Viśiṣṭādvaita-vādin is certainly not by that famous Yāmuna, the teacher of Rāmānuja. The latter was born in A.D. 906. He summarised the subject matter of the Gita in a few verses called Gītārtha-Saṅgraha on which Varvara Muni (14th century) wrote a commentary called Gītārtha-Saṅgraha dīpika. In the words of Yāmuna, the object of the Gītā is to establish the fact that Nārāyaṇa is the highest Brahman, attained only by devotion (bhakti) which is achieved through caste-duties (svadharma), right knowledge and disinclination to worldly pleasures (vairāgya).²⁷ According to him, the first six chapters of the Gītā describe the process of attaining self-knowledge by self-concentration (yoga) through knowledge and action along with self-surrender to God, the performance of enjoined duties and detachment from others. It is proposed by his commentator Nigamanta Mahādeśika that karma may lead to self-realization either indirectly through the attainment of Knowledge or directly by itself.

28

In the next six chapters the processes of the attainment of devotion by knowledge and by actions are described. It is by such devotion that the true nature of God can be realised. In the last six chapters, the nature of pradhāna, that of puruṣa and of the manifest world as also of the supreme Lord are described and distinguished along with the nature of actions, of knowledge and of devotion. Then follows the contents of the Gītā arranged chapterwise.

The nature of the saint of impurtable wisdom (sthūta-

(prajna), and its attainment only by a knowledge of the self
 as immortal and through detached performance of one's duties
 is stressed. The third chapter relates to the performance
 of one's duties without attachment for the preservation of
 the social order (*lok-raksha*). The performer is asked to
 eschew his ego since the real agents of his action are the
 strands (*gunas*). The fourth chapter describes the nature of
 God and his incarnation for the preservation of righteous
 people and the destruction of evil ones. Besides the reference
 to enjoined duties, the glory of knowledge is as well pointed
 out. The fifth one describes the advantages and the diverse
 modes of the yoga of action and also the nature of the state
 of realization of Brahman-yoga, its nature and practice. Its
 divisions into four kinds, the methods of yoga, and the nature
 of its realization, and its superiority for communication with
 God are described in the sixth chapter. The next one notices
 the reality of God, his nature veiled by *fantasy* and *illusion*,
 the way to seek his protection by different kinds of devotees
 and the superiority of the truly enlightened person. The eighth
 chapter describes the God and his nature and powers, the
 unchanged and unchangeable, the devoted seeking his protection
 and the nature of true wisdom. The glory of God is also his
 superiority as the incarnated person and the nature of devo-
 tional communion are recorded in the ninth chapter. The next
 one records his noble qualities and responses on his. The
 nature of God and his incarnation through devotion are
 treated in the eleventh chapter. The superiority of devotion
 and the methods of its attainment are also recorded in the

twelfth chapter. It is through devotion that God is pleased. The thirteenth chapter relates the nature of the body and the purification of the self for realization, the cause of bondage and right discrimination. The nature of action and its determination by the ties of guṇas are narrated in the next chapter with stress on self's future through the mercy of God alone. The fifteenth chapter describes the difference between the Supreme Lord and the pure selves, and between the pure and non-pure ones. The sixteenth chapter relates to the diversion of beings into godly and demoniac ones, and the role of scriptures in the attainment of knowledge as also for prescribing duties. The penultimate chapter distinguishes between scriptural and unscriptural things, while the last one takes God as the ultimate agent of all actions, and the necessity of pure conduct and mind and the after effect of one's deeds. Yāmāna as well records the duties associated with Karma-yoga, namely religious austerities, pilgrimage, gifts and sacrifices. The path of knowledge or jñānamarga consists of self-control and purity of mind, while bhakti-yoga or the path of devotion demands meditation of God, experienced by an excess of joy in communion with the divine. All these three paths are supposed to lead to one another and are related to the worship of God. These are equally helpful in discovering the true nature of one's self. According to Yāmāna, when ignorance is removed through self-realization, man attains supreme devotion to God and is received into God.

^{vi}
Ramāṇya : 29

A pupil of Yādavaprakāśa, an adherent of the strict

twelfth chapter. It is through devotion that the devotee
 the thirteenth chapter relates the nature of the body and
 the purification of the self for realization. The state of
 bondage and right discrimination. The nature of action and
 its determination by the size of ego are narrated in the
 next chapter with stress on self's nature through the story
 of God alone. The thirteenth chapter describes the distinction
 between the Supreme Lord and the pure selves, and between the
 pure and non-pure ones. The thirteenth chapter refers to the
 conversion of beings into Godly and demonic ones, and the role
 of scriptures in the attainment of knowledge as also for
 performing duties. The penultimate chapter distinguishes
 between spiritual and unspiritual things, while the last one
 takes God as the ultimate agent of all actions, and the necessity
 of pure conduct and mind and the effect of one's deeds.
 Yamas as well records the duties associated with Karma-yoga,
 namely religious austerities, pilgrimage, gifts and sacrifices.
 The path of knowledge or vidya consists of self-control
 and purity of mind, while bhakti-yoga or the path of devotion
 demands meditation of God, experienced by an excess of joy in
 communion with the divine. All these three paths are supposed
 to lead to one another and are related to the worship of God.
 These are equally helpful in discovering the true nature of
 one's self. According to Yamas, when ignorance is removed
 through self-realization, man attains supreme devotion to God
 and is received into God.

30
 Yamas :

Advaita philosophy of Śāṅkara, Rāmāṇya, according to tradition, was born in the year 938 of the Śaka era = A.D. 1016-17. In his youth he lived at Conjeeveram in Tamilnadu. His contribution to Indian thought was the effort to develop in a complete system, in opposition to the uncompromising Advaitism of Śāṅkara, a philosophical basis for the doctrine of devotion to God. This was presented in a poetical form in the hymns (prabandhas) of the Alvars. He had his training under Yamuna-Muni. He refutes the doctrine of the unreality of the world and the path of renunciation of action. Following the interpretation of Yamuna-carya, Ramanuja in his Gitārtha-Sangraha takes Brahman the highest reality as Spirit, but not without attributes. His commentary on the Gita is on Viśiṣṭādvaita lines viz. monism qualified as theism. He generally followed the lines of interpretations of his teacher Yamuna. He holds that the duties allotted to each caste must be performed as directed by the scriptures, the command of God. These obligatory duties need be performed without any desire for their fruits and purely as commands of the scriptures. (eka-śāstrarthataya anusthayam). The duties thus performed please God and equally destroy all impurities of the mind. When the senses are controlled, the man becomes fit for the path of knowledge (Gita III. 3). It is only through the adoration of God that one's sins accumulated in life could be washed away to make him pure and fit for the path of knowledge (Comment on III. 3). Further, in his interpretation of Karmayoga and Jñānayoga, he considers the former superior to the latter. According to Rāmānuja, the path of knowledge alone cannot lead to salvation, and without work even one's body cannot be sustained. Those following the path of

Advaita philosophy of Shankara, according to tradition, was born in the year 800 of the Saka era (A.D. 1050-51). His youth he lived at Conjeevaram in Tanjore. His contribution to Indian thought was the effort to develop in a complete system, in opposition to the unorthodox Advaita of Shankara, a philosophical basis for the doctrine of devotion (bhakti). This was presented in a poetical form in the *Yamuna-bhakti-rasam* of the Alvars. He had his training under Yamuna-bhakti. He recites the doctrine of the universality of the world and the path of renunciation of action. Following the interpretation of Yamuna-bhakti, he has in his *Gitā-śaṅkara* taken between the highest reality as Spirit, but not without attributes. His commentary on the Gita is on *Vishāyātmika* lines, viz. *śānta* qualified as theism. He generally followed the lines of interpretation of his teacher Īśvara. He holds that the duties allotted to each caste must be performed as directed by the scriptures, the command of God. These obligatory duties need be performed without any desire for their fruits and purely as commands of the scriptures. (*śānta-śānta-śānta-śānta*). The duties thus performed please God and equally destroy all impurities of the mind. When the senses are controlled, the man becomes fit for the path of knowledge (*Gitā III, 3*). It is only through the adoration of God that one's sins accumulated in life could be washed away to make him pure and fit for the path of knowledge (Comment on *Gitā III, 3*). Further, in his interpretation of Karma yoga and Jñāna yoga, he considers the former superior to the latter. According to Rāmānuja, the path of knowledge alone cannot lead to salvation, and without work even one's body cannot be sustained. Those following the path of

knowledge have to perform the enjoined duties (nitya) and even occasional ones (naimittika) too. As such, it is only through this course alone that one can attain self-realization. The path of performing one's duties must be followed until self-realization (ātmāvalokana) and liberation is possible through this course. The chief duty of the person is to be attached to God with complete unswerving devotion.

The Supreme God and the Vedic Ones :

Rāmānuja takes Vedic gods to be the ^{er}savants of the Supreme God. They are appointed by Him to perform their ordained functions and obligations. In his words, 'the world is no deception or illusion but is genuine and real. The world and God are one like body and soul. They constitute a whole and yet they are unchangeably different. Before its creation, the world is in a potential form, undeveloped into existing one with its diverse manifestations. In creation, the world is developed into name and form (nāmarūpa). The world is represented as the body of God and it is produced by the Supreme out of His own nature. God, as such, is both the instrumental and the material cause of the world. This analogy of soul and body is provided by Rāmānuja to suggest the absolute dependence of the world on God as the body is dependent on the soul. The world is described as the remainder (Īśvarasyaśeṣa) of God suggesting complete dependence and contingency of the world on that Supreme Spirit, called God.

Jīva and its Reality :

Further, Rāmānuja takes Jīva as real and it is not extinguished in the state of liberation. According to his inter-

Knowledge have to perform the enjoined duties (dharma) and even occasional ones (naimittika) too. As such, it is only through this course alone that one can attain self-realisation. The path of performing one's duties must be followed until self-realisation (ātmanvāṇanā) and liberation is possible through this course. The chief duty of the person is to be attached to God with complete unwavering devotion.

The Supreme God and the Vedic Ones :

Hanuman takes Vedic gods to be the servants of the Supreme God. They are appointed by Him to perform their ordained functions and obligations. In his words, the world is no deception or illusion but is genuine and real. The world and God are one like body and soul. They constitute a whole and yet they are unchangeably different. Before its creation, the world is in a potential form, undeveloped into existing one with its diverse manifestations. In creation, the world is developed into name and form (nāmarūpa). The world is represented as the body of God and it is produced by the Supreme out of His own nature. God, as such, is both the instrumental and the material cause of the world. This analogy of soul and body is provided by Hanuman to suggest the absolute dependence of the world on God as the body is dependent on the soul. The world is described as the remainder (śaśvata) of God suggesting complete dependence and contingency of the world on that Supreme Spirit, called God.

Life and its Reality :

Further, Hanuman takes life as real and it is not

pretation, the Upanisadic passage tat-tvam-asi 'that thou art' means that God is myself, even as my soul is the self of my body. God supports and controls the soul while the latter supports the body. God and soul are one not because of their identity but due to His presence in the soul. He is the inner guide - antaryāmin who dwells within the soul and, as such, is the principle of its life. The creature, however, remains distinct from the creator in time as well as in eternity.

Rāmānuja in his commentary on the Gītā is supposed to project a kind of personal mysticism. God is said to dwell into the secret places of the soul but remains unrecognized till the soul acquires the redeeming knowledge. This could be acquired only by serving God in an exceptional manner with our heart and soul. As such, while admitting the paths of knowledge, action and devotion being mentioned in the Gītā, Rāmānuja lays main emphasis on devotion. He as well notices the wretchedness of sin, the deep longing for the Divine, intense-faith and trust in God and his love and the experience of divine election. For Rāmānuja, the Supreme God for personal devotion is Viṣṇu. He is the only true god and it is only through service and fellowship that fellowship with God could be assured in Vaikuntha or heaven.

Surrender to God - the basis of spiritual life :

Finally, the essence of spiritual life, according to Rāmānuja, is surrender. It forms the basic discipline, and provides the highest aspiration to Divine Union. He calls it yoga, the nucleus of devotion. With it comes knowledge revealing the presence and the power of the Divinity - God. The man

gets realization through Divine conferment of a power which shapes our being in such a way as to make complete unity with Him. Rāmānuja adopts a modified monism and insists on the path of devotion. He as well approves the maintenance of caste rules. Both Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja subordinate Karma, of course with different motives. The final realization according to the former is through jñāna and it is devotion which ensures such liberation according to the latter.

Mādhva - the Will of God and Devotion to Him : 30

Mādhva (A.D. 1199 to 1276), also known as Ānandatīrtha, wrote a commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā called Gītā-bhāṣya and a separate monograph interpreting the main purpose of the Gītā, called Bhagavad-Gītā-tātparya-nirnaya. Both these works were commented upon by Jayatīrtha in his Prameya-dīpika and Nyāya-dīpika respectively. His main emphasis is that God is different from everything else and that the only way of attaining our highest goal is through devotion (bhakti), as love and affection (sucha). In the course of his interpretation he also introduces long discussions in refuting the monistic theory of Śāṅkara. According to him, it is the will of Him, the Lord which dominates and as such attachment to mundane things has no place in one's life. The performance of duties is enjoined for everybody. From the metaphysical point of view, Mādhva attempts to derive from the Gītā tenets of dualistic (dvaita) philosophy. He contends that it is self-contradictory to look upon the soul as identical with the Supreme, in one sense and different from Him in another. The two must be regarded as eternally different from each other and there is no room for any unity between them

...realized through ...
 ...but being in ...
 ...Ramanuja ...
 ...of devotion. He ...
 ...Ramanuja ...
 ...with different ...
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 ...liberation according to the latter.

Madhva - The Will of God and Devotion to Him

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 ...from the metaphysical point of view, ...
 ...from the ...
 ...states that it is self-sufficient to look upon the ...
 ...is identical with the Supreme, ...
 ...the two must be regarded as eternally different ...
 ...for each other and there is no ...

whether partially or wholly. His interpretation of Tat-tvam-asi is that we must give up the distinction between mine and thine, and hold that everything is subject to the control of God. Mādhva contends that devotion is the method particularly stressed in the Gīta. Madhva rejects not only the monism of Śaṅkara but also the Viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified monism of Rāmānuja.³¹

Dvaita or Dualism :

The basis of his philosophical style is dvaita or dualism, not that of spirit and matter, or that of good and evil. The distinction is between the independent Supreme Being (Paramātmān) and the dependent self (jīvātman). He as well notices five set of distinctions (pāñcabheda) between (a) God and the individual soul, (b) between God and matter, (c) between soul and matter, (d) between one soul and another, and (e) between one particular matter and another. According to Madhva, the Supreme Being is not Brahman but Viṣṇu - Nārāyaṇa or Para-Bhagavāna. The ignorance (avidya) of the natural soul is dispelled and salvation is obtained by right knowledge of God.

Mokṣa or salvation consists in the release from transmigration and eternal residence in the abode of Nārāyaṇa. Like the idea of eternal heaven or mokṣa, Mādhva as well refers to an eternal hell - a logical symmetry that is missing in other religions of the time. Thirty-seven works are attributed to him, the most important are his Commentaries on the Vedānta-Sūtras and on the Bhagavad-Gītā. There are two works written on him as well, namely Mādhva-mañjarī dealing with the religious history of his time and Mādhava-vijaya - his religious encounters.

whether partially or wholly. His interpretation of the Vedas is that we must give up the distinction between the material and the spiritual and hold that everything is subject to the control of God. Krishna contends that devotion is the method of attaining God in the life. Krishna rejects not only the matter of the Vedas but also the Vedantists or qualified matter of the Vedas.

Evils or Qualities :

The basis of his philosophical style is evils or qualities, not that of evils and matter, or that of good and evil. The distinction is between the independent Supreme Being (Brahman) and the dependent self (Atman). He as well makes five set of distinctions (pañcavidha) between (a) God and the individual soul, (b) between God and matter, (c) between soul and matter, (d) between one soul and another, and (e) between one particular matter and another. According to Krishna, the Supreme Being is not Brahman but Vignu - Narayana or Parashpadavara. The ignorance (avidya) of the natural soul is dispelled and salvation is obtained by right knowledge of God.

Moksha or salvation consists in the release from transmigration and eternal residence in the mode of Narayana. Like the idea of eternal heaven or moksha, Krishna as well refers to an eternal hell - a logical symmetry that is missing in other religions of the time. Thirty-seven works are attributed to him, the most important are his commentaries on the Vedanta-sutras and on the Bhagavad-gita. There are two works written on him as well, namely Madhya-parva dealing with the religious history of his time and Madhya-vijaya - his religious encounters.

The author of these two works is Nārāyaṇa, son of Trivikrama, his disciple.

32

Nimbarka and his Dvaita-advaita - dual non-dual doctrine :

Nimbarka (A.D. 1162) adopts the theory of dvaitādvaita (dual non-dual doctrine). He wrote on the Brahma-sūtra while his disciple Keśava Kasmirin wrote a commentary on the Gīta called Tattvapraśāsa. According to Nimbarka, the soul (Jīva), the world (Jagat) and God are different from each other and still the existence and activity of the soul and the world depend on the will of God. Reference is made to two kinds of souls, those already emancipated and others still in bondage. He emphasises on devotion, self-surrender and supreme effort for union with God. Jīva finds its true nature and destiny when by the grace of God, the hold of prakṛiti is weakened and finally there is complete separation between the two. As such, devotion to the Supreme is the principal theme of Nimbarka's writings.

33

Vallabha : (A.D. 1479)

He develops the metaphysical concept called Suddhādvaita or pure non-dualism. The ego (Jīva), when pure and unblinded by illusions and the Supreme Brahman are one. Souls are particles of God like sparks of fire and they cannot acquire the knowledge necessary for obtaining release except by the grace of the Supreme. According to Vallabha, Devotion to God is the most important means of obtaining release. Bhakti, in fact, is truth associated with love (premalakṣaṇa śraddhā Amṛitataranginī.) As proposed earlier, Vallabha questioned Śāṅkara's philosophy as true advaita (monism), it could be a mere form of it and

32

The author of these two books is a disciple of his disciple. Kimbarke and his disciple are the authors of these two books. Kimbarke (A.D. 1450) wrote the theory of dual non-dual doctrine. He wrote on the basis of his disciple Keshava Kumbhakar's work a commentary on the book called Advaita Samuccaya. According to Kimbarke, the soul is the world (jivat) and God the different from each other and still the existence and activity of the soul and God depend on the will of God. Reference is made to two kinds of souls, those already emancipated and others still in bondage. He emphasized on devotion, self-surrender and extreme effort for union with God. Jivat finds the true nature and destiny when by the grace of God, the hole of prakriti is weakened and finally there is complete separation between the two. As such devotion to the Supreme is the practical theme of Kimbarke's

writings.

33

Vallabha : (A.D. 1479)

He develops the metaphysical concept called Advaita or pure non-dualism. The ego (jivat), when pure and unadorned by illusions and the Supreme Brahman are one. Souls are particles of God like sparks of fire and they cannot acquire the knowledge necessary for obtaining release except by the grace of the Supreme. According to Vallabha, devotion to God is the most important means of obtaining release. Ekant, in fact, is truth associated with love (prema). Vallabha's philosophy is proposed earlier. Vallabha questioned Kimbarke's philosophy

called it Keval-ādvaita, 'mere monism', since it had to depend on māyā or illusion. He called his own type of monism Suddh-ādvaita or pure monism. The phenomenal world, according to him is not illusion since it is separated from Brahman by his own will. The Supreme Deity is personified by him as Kṛiṣṇa. He creates the world by the force of his will. He is the Creator (Karta) as also the enjoyer (bhokta) of the world which is divine, He equally deprecates asceticism, fasting and doing penance, and to him restrain passion and show indifference to the pleasures of this world are not virtues. These constitute an affront to the deity since he has provided man with the bounty (pustī) of this world to enjoy it. His system is sometimes called pustimārga.

34

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī :

He as well wrote a commentary on the Gītā in which he recognizes the value of different channels of realization of truth, such as yoga, and the analytical approach of Sāṅkhya. He, however, considers devotion as the best course for reaching one's end and in the life of the spirit. He prefers Kṛiṣṇa as the best emblem of the Divine who is the source of all blessedness for the soul and provides solace in times of trouble. Sri Kṛiṣṇa is the heart's joy of Madhusūdana and complete devotion to him is the most effective method of God-realization. He is no doubt tolerant towards others who prefer to worship the inscrutable unmanifest. For him there is nothing greater than the thought of surrender to Sri Kṛiṣṇa and nothing greater than his love. Madhusūdana was a great monist which he tries to establish logically in his Advaitasiddhi. He is reported to

called it Maya or illusion. He called his own type of monism Advaita or pure monism. The phenomenal world, according to him is not illusion since it is separated from Brahman by his own will. The Supreme Deity is personified by him as Krishna. He creates the world by the force of his will. He is the Creator (Karta) as also the enjoyer (Bhokta) of the world which is divine. He equally deprecates asceticism, fasting and doing penance, and to his restrain passion and show indifference to the pleasures of this world are not virtues. These constitute an obstacle to the deity since he has provided man with the power (prajñā) of this world to enjoy it. His system is sometimes called prajñā.

24

Madhusūdana Sarasvati

He as well wrote a commentary on the Gita in which he recognizes the value of different channels of realization of truth, such as yoga, and the analytical approach of Bhāṣya. He, however, considers devotion as the best course for reaching one's end and in the life of the spirit. He prefers Krishna as the best emblem of the Divine who is the source of all blessedness for the soul and provides relief in times of trouble. Sri Krishna is the heart's joy of Madhusūdana and complete devotion to him is the most effective method of God-realization. He is so much tolerant towards others who prefer to worship the Ishta-devatā or unmanifest. For him there is nothing greater than the thought of surrender to Sri Krishna and nothing greater than his love. Madhusūdana was a great devotee which he tried to establish logically in his Govindasūktī. It is reported to

have the mystic vision and he went deeper in his indream urge to concentrate on the Divine with the process of self-surrender (saranagati) and adjusting his life style according to divine direction and for Divine purpose. Concentration on the Divine with complete surrender, according to him, provides greatest satisfaction.

³⁵
Śrīdharasvāmin (14th cent).:

He is also a great commentator on the Gīta. His work is called Śrīdharivyākhyā. According to him, Purushottama regulates the world order as the controller and master of everything, even though aksara is behind the world of creative evolutes. He therefore regards this principle of 'Purushottama' being more important as it has the profound poise of the aksara as well as the superior dynamism beyond the creative one of Nature. Śrīdhara as well concentrates on the Divine by complete surrender to Him. According to him, no sin is incurred by forsaking one's duties and the Lord promises liberation from all sins for those who concentrate on him with devotion. All spiritual possibilities meet in the path of devotion.

³⁶
Later Commentators :

Among the later commentators, Raghavendra svāmin (17th cent), a pupil of Sudhindrayati, wrote three works on the Gīta called Gītāvivṛiti, Gītārtha Saṅgraha and Gītārtha Vivarana. Other commentators include Vallabhācārya to whom reference has already been made, Vijñānabhikṣu, Keśavabhatta of the Nimbarka school who wrote Gīta-tatva-prakasika, Anjakeya, Kalyana Bhatta, Jagaddhara, Jayarama writer of Gītā-Sāratha Saṅgraha, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana noted for his commentary entitled Gītā-bhūṣana-bhāṣya,

37

Jñanesvara :

Besides the commentaries in Sanskrit, the Marathi commentary entitled Jñanesvarā written by Jñānadāsa or Jñāneśvara (1275-96) is also important. It is a paraphrase and commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā written in old Marathi. Its fusion of devotional philosophy and melodious poetry enraptures and thrills the reader. In the actual text it is referred to both as a dharma-kīrtan or religious song, seva and as a tīkā or commentary. He expounds the religious path of knowledge (Jñāna), Action (Karma), Renunciation (Sanyāsa), tyāga and Devotion (Bhakti) as the ways of attaining salvation. Throughout the text the author places great emphasis on monism (advaita) and stress on devotion, connected with the Bhakti movement of the time, with god Vithal or Vitthal as the supreme deity.

Madhusudana with his Gudhārtha-dēpika, Brahmanandagiri, Mathuranatha and his Bhagavad-Gītā prakāśa, Dattatreya of Prabodha-Candrikā, Ramakrishna, Mukundadasa, Ramanārayana, Viśveśara, Sankarānanda, Sivadayalu Śrīdharasvāmin, author of Subodhinī, Sadānanda Vyāsa, Sūrya Pandita with his Paramārtha propa ; Nilakantha and his Bhavadīpika and also from the saiva point of view Rajanaka and Ramakantha with his Sarvatu-bhadra are recorded as commentators and their commentaries on Bhagavad Gita. Several other works relating to the general purport of Gita were also written such as Bhagavad-gītārtha-saṅgraha by Abhinavagupta and Nrisimha Thakkura, Bhagavad-gītā-sāra by Gokulcandra, Bhagavad-gītā-lakṣabharana by Vadiraja, Bhagavad-gītā-sāra by Kaivalyananda Sarasvatī, Bhagavad-gītā-sārā-saṅgraha by Narahari and Bhagavad-gītā-hetu nirṇaya by Vithala Diksita. Most of these commentaries either support Śāṅkara's view point with emphasis on jñāna, or in support of the Vaiṣṇava view point supporting the performance of normal duties in all stages, but sometimes differing only in the conception of God and His relation with men. These have no original ideas and as such are of little importance except by way of enumeration in the list of commentators and the commentaries on the Gītā.

In a review of the works of classical commentators on Bhagavad-Gītā, only a few are supreme. Vṛittikāra Bodhāyana, the author of a voluminous commentary on the Vedānta sūtra as also a vṛitti or gloss on the Gītā. According to Ānandgiri, the Gītā teaches the combined pursuit of Jñāna and Karma - knowledge and action. Neither of them by itself leads to freedom from bondage and liberation from this earthly existence. Śāṅkara, however, believes that Jñāna or wisdom is the highest

means to perfection and intuitional wisdom alone can provide realization of the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Brahma. All action is the cause of bondage, since it is dependent on the false sense of duality; with true wisdom, the ideas of duality are given up ; the soul is saved and there-after the performance of any action has no meaning. The two other paths of Karma or action, Bhakti or devotion, Yoga or self control are helpful in attaining wisdom or Jñāna. Rāmānuja distinguishes - śeṣa Jiva or cit, world or acit and God or Īśvara, with the former two constituting the body of God. He in fact adopts or modified monism, and equally insists on devotion in practice. Both Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja subordinate karma, of course with different motives ; the former till the realization of jñāna and the latter even after that. Mādhva, the third in the trio repudiates the theory of Māyā and accepts an ultimate distinction between the absolute Brahman and the individual souls. He no doubt stresses on devotion to God as the supreme way of bliss. Vallabha, however, declares that Brahman and the purified soul are one, and makes jivā a part of Brahman. He does not consider māyā to be an illusion, but a power separated from Īśvara by his will. The salvation of an individual is possible only through the grace of God. According to Nimbarka, both the world and the souls are dependent on God in whom they exist though in a subtle condition. His theory is called dualistic non-dualism. Jñāneśvara makes Patañjali yoga, the aim of the teaching of Gita.

When there are so many views of the Gita suggested by eminent commentators, its bold and brilliant synthesis and

reconciliations do not always provide exact information about the logical combination of contradictory ideas. In the words of Radha[^]Krishnan, 'there is no denying that the Gītā fosters a life of spirit. There is a romantic twilight which captures the imagination and uplifts our nature, so long as we are religiously minded and rely on dogmatic thought. But the critical intellect has to work on it with care before it can deduce a consistent system from it.'

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FOOTNOTES

1. The theories of interpolations in regard to the interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gita are considered by R.D. Ranade in Chapter VI in his work The Bhagavad Gita as a Philosophy of God-Realisation (Op.cit p. 69-84). He notices five such theories : Garbés doctrine of theism, Holtzmann's partheism and those of Schrader, Oldenburg and Otto. The theory of interpolationism was first suspected by Humboldt in the year 1826. He excludes Mimānsic and Vedantic passages and retains only those promoting theism, moralism as ancillary to theism and particularly philosophic devotions.
2. Edgerton finds it abundantly clear that the Gītā makes no attempt to be logical or systematic in philosophy. It is frankly mystical and emotional. The Gītā finds no difficulty in saying both yes and no at the same time. To the Gītā as to the Christian mystics, reason is an uncertain and flickering light. The truly wise person must follow the kindly light, sinking his personality in estatic devotion to God, trusting absolutely in Him and throwing upon Him all responsibilities. (The Bhagavad-Gita. Op.cit. p. 91).
3. Hiriyanna : Outlines of Indian Philosophy - Op.cit. p. 118.
4. Dasgupta : History of Indian Philosophy (Op.cit. II. p.502).
5. Hill proposes that the Bhagavad-Gita, as it now appears in the Epic, is not an original poem composed by a single hand, but an ancient work, re-written and enlarged. (The Bhagavad-Gita - Op.cit p. 18).
6. Introduction to the Bhagavad-Gītā by Svami Prabhavanand and Christopher.
7. Hindu Gita - London. 1986 p. xxvi.
8. *ibid.* p. 16.
9. *ibid.* p. 28.
10. *ibid.* p. 30.
11. See the article and Bibliography on Sāṅkara in ERE. XI. pp. 189. 1856-1896. Sharma : The Hindu Gita pp. 44-105. Beyan Railand : The Hindu World. Vol. II. pp.
12. IA. 1882. pp. 171 ff.
13. ERE. XI. p. 186 b.
14. ERE. II. pp. 796^b - 799^a
15. *ibid.* p. 187^b
16. ERE. XII. pp. 597^a - 598^a

17. *ibid.* XI. p. 188^a
18. *ibid.* p. 189^b
19. Sharma. *Op.cit* p. 44.
20. Radhakrishnan. The Bhagavad-Gita p. 17.
21. ERE. II. p. 189^a
22. Sharma. Hindu Gita. *Op. cit.* p. 97.
23. History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. II. p. 438.
24. Belvalkar. Srimad Bhagavad-Gita with the Commentary of Jñāna-Samuccaya of Ananda (Vardhan) Poona 1941.
25. Dasgupta. *Op.cit* p. 439.
26. Belvalkar. *Op.cit* p. 91.
27. Dasgupta. *Op.cit* p. 439.
28. *ibid.* pp. 440-441.
29. ERE. X. pp. 572^a - 574^b with Bibliography. See also Benjamin Rowland. Hindu World. London. 1968. Vol. II. pp. 285-287 with Bibliography. Sharma. Hindu-Gita - *Op.cit* pp. 106-144 ; Radhakrishnan. *Op.cit.* pp. 18-19.
30. ERE. VIII. pp. 232^a - 235^b with Bibliography. Benjamin Walker - *Op.cit* Vol. II. pp. 1-2 with Bibliography. Radhakrishnan. *Op.cit* p. 19. Dasgupta. *Op.cit* p. 442.
31. ERE. II. p. 545.
32. ERE. IX. pp. 373^b - 374^a with Bibliography. Benjamin ~~Rowland~~ ^{Walker}. *Op.cit* II. pp. 133-34.
33. ERE. XII. pp. 580^b - 581^a. Benjamin ~~Rowland~~ ^{Walker}. *Op.cit.* Vol. II. pp. 547-548.
34. Radhakrishnan. *Op.cit* p. 201.
35. Radhakrishnan. *Op. cit.*
36. Dasgupta - *Op.cit* p. 443.
37. Prabhu. V.G. Jñānesvari. London. 1967.

1. Ibid. XI. p. 182.
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CHAPTER III

THE BHAGAVADGITA AND THE WEST

(Last Quarter of 18th to the end of the 19th
centuries)
(1786 - 1900)

The Bhagavad-gītā is described as 'one of the greatest curiosities ever presented to the literary world'. There is some evidence that the Gītā had been known atleast to some Europeans since the sixteenth century and that a manuscript translation of part of it into Portuguese had been made at that time.¹ Europe, however, was for a long time unaware of India having a literary tradition of its own. The Sanskrit pandits too were reluctant to share their literary heritage with the outside world. As correctly pointed out by Warren Hastings² in his letter to Nathaniel Smith, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the East India Company, 'very natural causes may be described for their reluctance to communicate the mysteries of their learning to strangers, as those to whom they have been for some centuries in subjection, never enquired into them, but to turn their religion into derision, or deduce from them arguments to support the intolerant principle of their own. From our nation they have received a different treatment, and are no less eager to impart their knowledge than we are to receive it'.³ In his words once again, 'many passages will be found obscure, many will seem redundant ; others will be found clothed with ornaments of fancy unsuited to our taste and some elevated to a track of sublimity into which our habits of judgement will find it difficult to pursue them.'

The Geetā - a performance of great originality :

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'performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unequalled ; and a single exception among all the known religions of mankind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines'. 'Such studies are useful', in his words, 'in forming the moral character and habits of the service. Moreover, every accumulation of knowledge and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the State ; it is the gain of humanity, in the specific instance it attracts and conciliates distant affections ; it looses the weight of chain holding the natives in subjection ; and it imprints on the hearts of our countrymen the sense and obligation of benevolence. Warren Hastings bemoans that the inhabitants of India were considered by many as creatures scarcely elevated above the degree of savage life. In his words, that prejudice is not yet wholly eradicated though surely abated. Every instance which brings their real character home, says the late Governor-General, ⁵ 'to observation will impress us with a more generous feeling for their natural rights, and teach us to estimate them by the measure of our own. Such instances can only be obtained in their writings, and these will survive when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the forces which it once yielded of wealth and power are left to remembrance'.

Warren Hastings as well made reference to Wilkins. 'The translator', in his words ⁶ 'has united to an early and successful attainment of the Persian and Bengali languages,

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the study of Sanskrit. To this he devoted himself with a perseverance of which there are few examples and with a success which encouraged him to undertake the translation of the Mahābhārata. He has rendered a portion of it with great accuracy and fidelity of its elegance and the skill with which he has familiarised his own native language to so foreign an original, the reader will judge for himself. It may, in the first instance, clear the way to a wide and unexplored field of fruitful knowledge.

Wilkin's Preface :

Wilkins in his preface suggests⁷ that these dialogues were to unite all the prevailing modes of worship of these days ; and set up the doctrine of the unity of the God head in opposition to idolatrous sacrifice. 'The reader', according to Wilkins, will have the liberality to excuse the obscurity of many passages and the confusion of sentiments which runs through the whole in its present form'. The translator admits that his notes are insufficient to remove the veil of mystery and the text is but imperfectly understood by the most learned Brahmans of his time. It has more comments than the Revelations. These were very frequently found more obscure than the original they were intended to elucidate.

Comments on the Gītā :

Wilkin's translation of the Bhagavad-gītā also received⁸ interesting comments, such as written in a solemn Herbaic style more acceptable to English readers because it recaptures the cadences of the Authorised version, with the added Latin sound

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and effect which the later eighteenth century had learnt with Johnson to master. The work provided incentive to many who saw in ancient Sanskrit literature the mystery surrounding the great civilization of India. It is believed that echoes of the Ecclesiasticians and the Proverbs deepens the tones of this translation of a subtle reminiscence of the rhythical passages from the Bible. The spirit of the 'Sermon on the Mount' is also proposed to compete almost on equal terms with the Bhagavad-gītā. Warren Hastings found in this Indian sacred Book echoes of words that range in the Churches of his own faith. He found solace as well as fortitude from this translation. A contemporary scholar, Jurist Sir William Jones, who translated the Śakuntalā of Kālidāsa (1789) observed that 'to form a correct idea of the religion and the literature of the Hindus it was necessary to forget all that has been written on the subject by ancient or modern writers, before the publication of the Gītā'.⁹ Colebrooke, another great Sanskritist of the time - called 'Sanskrit-mad', in his opinion on Wilkin's translation, points out that 'he has never seen any book which can be depended on for information concerning the real opinions of the Hindus.'

The Asiatic Society of Bengal and Western Intellectuals :

The foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, and its research publications entitled 'Asiatic Researches' as also the translation of a number of important Sanskrit works within ten years helped in focussing the attention of Western intellectuals towards India's Sanskrit literature and its history and culture. Goethe, the famous German poet, was so

much impressed by Śākuntalā in translation by Jones that he described ¹⁰ it in one word as 'the blossom of spring and the fruits that follow, providing charms and delights, strength and support, as also encompassing the earth and heaven'. The first contacts with the authentic literature of the Hindoos produced enthusiasm and realization of the importance of Sanskrit among the European diletante. The typical impact on ancient Hindu India as revealed from Gītā and Śākuntalā - 'the Fatal Ring' on the German mind could be seen in later Romantics in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, like the two Schlegels, Jean Paul Richter and others. A school of German Indologists emerged and Sanskrit figured in several Universities as a course of study with a ^C Chair created for it. In France too, Antoni Chezy who learnt Sanskrit from Alexandar Hamilton, an English hos^tage in Paris, in turn ~~he~~ taught Bopp, Humbolt, August Von Schlegal, Burnouf and others. In 1815 he was appointed as the first professor of Sanskrit at College de France, in Paris, as Schlegal was at Bonn in the same year.

Wilkins and Sanskrit in England :

In England too Wilkins joined the Haileybury College, established in 1805 for the training of the Company's writers, an assignment as examiner and visitor which continued without any break till his death in London in 1836. Among the British ¹¹ scholars of the time, Robertson of Edinburgh quotes in extense extracts from the translation of the two major works, Śākuntalā and the Bhagavad-gītā. He refers to Wilkins as 'better qualified' perhaps than any European ever was to judge with respect to this subject - one Sovereign Lord and the Unity

of God. This professor of Divinity quotes the translation from the Bhagavad-gītā. 'Some regard the soul as a wonder, others hear of it with astonishment, but no one knoweth it, the weapon divideth it not, the fire burneth it not, the water corrupteth it not, the wind directs it not away, for it is indivisible, inconsumable, incorruptible ; it is eternal, permanent, immovable ; it is invisible, inconceivable and unalterable.' He quotes again from the 'Song-Eternal' that 'the man is praised who having subdued all his passions, performeth with his active facilities all functions of life, unconcerned about the event. 'Let the motive be in the deed and not in the event'. 'Be not one whose motive for action is the hope of reward. Depend upon application, perform thy duty, abandon all thoughts of the consequence, and make the event equal, whether it terminates in good or in evil. For such an equality is called Yog (i.e. attention to what is spiritual). 'Wise men who have abandoned all thoughts of the fruit which is produced from their action, are freed from the chains of birth and go to the regions of eternal happiness.'

Robertson makes a comparative study of the Ethical and moral teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā with the doctrines of the stoical school, and suggests that 'these distinguishing doctrines were taught in India many ages before the birth of Zeno.' 'The principle design of the Bhagavad-gītā,¹² according to Robertson, 'seems to have been to establish the doctrine of the unity of God-head, and form a just view of the divine nature to deduce an idea of what worship will be most acceptable to a perfect Being'. Robert-¹³sons enjoins his countrymen to look upon the Hindus as descendants of the people who had attained a very high degree of improvement many ages before the last step towards civilization had been

taken in any part of Europe.

Other Translations of the Gītā :

Wilkins translation marked the beginning of Sanskrit scholarship in Europe. This translation was republished in French by J.P. Parand in 1787 and William Von Schlegel (1769-1847) who became in 1818 the first professor of Sanskrit at Bonn. He published the second direct translation of the Gītā from Sanskrit into German. A decade earlier, Schlegel's younger brother Friedrich (1772-1829) had published a book on the language and the wisdom of India, entitled Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier. In 1825 the elder Schlegel published ¹⁴ the second direct translation of the Gītā from Sanskrit into Latin. It is a conscientious and faithful attempt to treat the philosophical content of the poem in a masterly fashion. At that time Wilholm Von Humbolt lectured on the Gītā to the Berlin Academy of Sciences. A summary of the contents of Gītā was published in 1826 in his Lecture 'Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gītā bekante Episode des Mahābhārata'. The German scholar shared his thoughts on the Gītā with his contemporary Eugene Burnouf of Paris, more as a philosophical poetry to be listened like music and enjoyed. Humbolt is reported to have found in the Gītā his own spiritual ancestors providing its 'Perennial Philosophy', the essential message of all mysticism - Eastern and Western, past and present. He was apalled by Gita's originality and its simplicity with its emphasis on the ideas of duty and devotion. He showed the views of Kant (1724-1796) that India was the home of consummate wisdom and virtue, having the capacity to make all its devotees virtuous and mild. Further, Humbolat remarked that Gita's ideas were the

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deepest and the most elevated which the world had to offer, and he wanted to make these his own. Its contents were universally human, and not Human or Indian only, providing message of Oneness with God and with Nature.

The Bhagavad-Gītā and its impact in England in the early 19th century :

In England the Bhagavad-Gītā in the early nineteenth century had a rather mixed reception. The poet Robert Southey (1774-1843) had read the Gītā in the preparation of his lurid narrative poem The Curse of Kahana (1810) but found his reading of little help to improve the final result.¹⁶ So also Macaulay found the Gītā of little relevance. He looked with disdainⁱⁿ the entire edifice of Indian traditional learning. England had no doubt several noted Sanskritists, Colebrooke and Wilson being the two great ones. The former concentrated on many aspects of Sanskrit literature, its grammar, philosophy and Science. Wilson emerged as the leading orientalist of the time. He became the first Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford in 1832. Wilson in the words of Max-Muller, 'had lived through almost the whole history of Sanskrit scholarship, and had taken part in nearly every important work that marked an epoch in the study of Indian literature, history and religion. Every one of his works represents a new conquest'. Surprisingly the Gītā does not figure in his contributions to scholarship. A contemporary writer Victor Cousin (1792-1867) was instrumental in turning philosophy in France from the materialist excesses of the Post-Revolutionary period towards his own concept of eclectic idealism. His acquaintance with

The Bhagavad-Gita and its impact in England in the early 19th century

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Schlegel in Germany generated his interest in the *Gītā*, and he pronounced that India was noted for its 'universal symbolism'. In his words,¹⁷ 'the beauty, the merit of action, is that it should be undertaken with a certain indifference to whatever results it might produce. Doubtless one must act, but as though one did not act, nothing exists but the eternal principle, being itself'. Cousin's Cours de Philosophie (Paris 1841) seems to have induced Emerson to take interest in the *Gītā*.

Ralph Waldeo Emerson (1803-1882),¹⁸ the American author and minister of a unitarian Church for a few years, is noted for his philosophy of transcendentalism, which concentrates on trusting the deepest voices of one's own being. He freely follows the new light that new light that new days brought to him. He is truly loyal to the past and actually follows on the footsteps of those great souls who preceded him. He is uncertain of his bearings on the orient but after receiving a copy of the *Gītā* costing him a pound, he writes, 'I have been so fortunate as to procure a copy of the Bhagavat-Geeta from London and am free to return the borrowed one to one Mrs. Cabot, with thanks. Emerson finds in the *Gītā* the synthesis of theory (Sāṅkhya) and action (yoga) under the canopy of duty (dharma). Describing it a magnificent day spent with the *Gītā*, Emerson wrote in his journal that 'it was the first of books; it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered over and this disposed of the same question which exercise in us.'¹⁹ As the propagator of Transcedentalism, Emerson suggests that 'thinking

Schlegel in Germany generated his interest in the Bible, and he pronounced that India was noted for the universal symbolism. In his words, 'the beauty, the moral of action, is that it should be understood with a certain indifference to whatever results it might produce. But as though one did not act, nothing exists but the eternal principle, being itself.' Comala's Leaves of Willow (Paris 1941) seems to have induced Emerson to take interest in the Bible.

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should be for right action. His poem on 'Brahma' beginning with 'If the red slayer thinks he slays or if the slain thinks he is slain, they know not well the subtle ways. I keep and pass and turn again, seems to be based on the teaching of the Gītā relating to the immortal nature of the soul (II. 19). Though the body may be killed, the soul remains untouched, merely passing on to join itself to other bodies. He speaks of the 'The Over soul' called the 'Brahma'. Emerson found confirmation of his philosophical thinking in the Gītā which he tried to transplant into far distant soil. His stress on the ethical value of life and his vision of the glory of living in the present age, characterises his philosophy of life. His general manliness and closeness to life, his insistence on concentration, thought and discipline are his great fortes. He is supposed to have his head in the clouds but his feet are very much upon the earth. Emerson integrates Hindu concepts on an abstract level within the totality of his philosophical thinking.

Thoreau (1817-62)²⁰ :

Poet, Philosopher and writer, Henry David Thoreau was a colleague of Emerson and his company of the New England Transcendentalists. He subscribed to the view that Nature was the field of action as well as contemplates and upheld the right of self-culture, and the true and faithful reporter of a rare spirit. He differed from Emerson on the love for Plato which was not shared by the junior colleague. He was more practical in his approach towards the concept of life in relation to action within a disciplined framework. From the immortality of soul (ātman), as accepted by Emerson, Thoreau's teachings concentrated

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on Karmayoga - the discipline of actions. His thoughts on the Gītā were more explicit and expressed at great length in an eight page meditation, incorporated in his early work.- A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers. Here he contrasts the 'pure morality of Christian scripture with the pure intellectuality' of the Hindu scripture in general, and the Gītā in particular. The Hindu qualities are described as being buoyancy, freedom, flexibility, variety, possibility of the Unnamed as against human, practical and radical of Christianity. He was convinced of Gita's superiority with its reader raised into and sustained in a higher, pure or rare region of thought. In his words,²¹ 'I would say to the reader of scripture if they wish for a good book, read the Bhagavad-Geeta, translated by Charles Wilkins. It deserves to be read with reverence even by Yankees. Besides the vast and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat-Geeta, even our Shakespeare seems somewhat youthfully green .. Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light which it is destined²² to derive thence'. According to Thoreau,²² 'In every man's brain is the Sanskrit'. Further, he describes his routine. 'In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial'. Thoreau was much impressed by the ideal of the yogin which he followed in his private life, inflicting on himself austerities with a stern satisfaction. Material poverty was one facet of the discipline, others were solitude, chastity and a measure of personal austerity. This

act of discipline turned his back on the materialistic values of the world, as comfort and pleasure, and to impose on himself an inward discipline to find his own soul.

Thoreau's liberal temper and eclectic outlook : ²³

Thoreau's liberal temper and eclectic outlook and intellectual curiosity made him admire the Hindu scriptures and philosophy. 'What extracts from the Vedas I have read', says this thinker, 'fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary'. He as well called Hindu asceticism which the West described as 'life-negating ideal', 'a more refined and nobler luxury'. Entranced by the thought of Hindu wisdom which never perspired but unfolded naturally, Thoreau pronounced 'give me a sentence which no intelligent person can understand. There must be a kind of life and palpitation to it, and under its words, a kind of blood must circulate for ever. Thoreau's relation to Hindu philosophy had some negative points as well. He did not conceive of virtue as a knowing not a doing, nor could he think of the moral good as the quality of a mind slumbering, never active in the ways of the world.

The Gita and Christian Missionaries and Mystics : ²⁴

The role of the Bhagavad-gita in relation to the activities of the missionaries and mystics as well calls for attention. The 'transcendental age' in matters of religion is supposed to have lasted for two to three decades till the fifties of the last century. While Christian missionaries in India were engaged in proselytising activities, judging Hinduism, not by the contents of its scriptures, but by its popular practices. There were other voices demanding an

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The life and Christian missionaries and politics

The role of the Bhagavad-Gita in relation to the activities of the missionaries and politics as well calls for attention. The 'transcendental age' in matters of religion is supposed to have lasted for two to three decades till the middle of the last century. While Christian missionaries in India were engaged in proselytising activities, judging Hinduism, not by the contents of its scriptures, but by its

enquiry and a hearing with such scriptures becoming more and more available. The Bhagavad-Gītā was one such prominent Hindu text. The Christian response was provided through the quest for 'correspondences' and 'points of contact' between Christianity and Hinduism. This made the study of Hindu texts obligatory for the missionaries. While the Christian preachers could not find the fulness of religious truth as revealed to their study of the Bible, in a Hindu scripture, but they were able to place whatever value they could upon the Gītā. The last word on matters concerning man's salvation was of course their preserve. Parallelism between the New Testament and the Bhagavad-gītā were traced by some such scholars, more on a spirit of placing to the latter indebted to the former for borrowing Christian ideas. As was later pointed out by John Davis²⁵, Lorinser, the translator of the Gītā from the German edition by Schlegel, maintains that the author of the Bhagavad-gītā must have been acquainted with the doctrines of the Christian faith, and that an influence was superimposed on his Brahmanic training from this source.'

Although the Gītā was not brought forcefully to the attention of the Christian missionaries in India until the eighties, a polyglot edition of the 'Song' was published in 1849 by Rev. R.D.Griffith²⁶ with the text in Sanskrit and translation in Canarese and reproduction of English translation of Wilkins, with a prelatory essay by Griffith. While accepting the Gītā as a specimen of natural theology, he notices internal inconsistency in the Hindu text with its moral teachings, both unclear and impracticable. In his view, the exercise of morals is always inseparable from the consequences of morals and

endlessly and a hearing with such scattered documents more and more available. The Bhagavad-Gita was one of the prominent things that. The Christian response was provided through the quest for 'correspondences' and 'points of contact' between Christianity and Hinduism. This made the study of Hindu texts satisfactory for the missionaries. While the Christian presence could not find the richness of religious truth as revealed in their study of the Bible, in a Hindu scripture, but they were able to place whatever value they could upon the Gita. The last word on matters concerning man's salvation was of course their preserve. Parallelism between the New Testament and the Bhagavad-Gita were found by some such scholars, more on a spirit of placing the latter indebted to the former for borrowing Christian ideas. As was later pointed out by John Dunsford, the translator of the Gita from the German edition by Schlegel, maintains that the author of the Bhagavad-Gita must have been acquainted with the doctrine of the Christian faith, and that an influence was suggested on his dramatic training from this source.

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simple obligation is powerless to provide the motion for right action. In his words, 'The Gītā's doctrine of niskāma karma therefore simply will not work. Griffith could not find any trace of the notion of progress in the Gītā. Instead, there was the doctrine of Metempsychosis (transmigration of soul) which explicitly contradicted the tendency of everything to advance itself. He, however, stated that it would be unjust to condemn Hinduism out of hand as a basis of some of its practices. There are no doubt wounds within which Hinduism cannot heal, distempers which it cannot eradicate.²⁷ Griffith equally advised the fellow missionaries not to employ only rude declaration and ridicule to convince the Hindus to the superiority of Christian teachings, to his own, as it was bound to be a failure. It would be easier to achieve success by pointing out doctrinal correspondence between their system and our own.

Emule-Louis Burnouf (1821-1907) :²⁸

The contribution of the French scholars to Gītā really begins with Burnouf whose French translation along with the Sanskrit text in Devanāgarī script appeared in 1861. It was entitled La Bhagavad-Gītā ou le chant du bien heureux poeme Indien. This was of course not the first study of the Gītā by a French scholar. In 1787 two years after the publication of Wilkin's translation, the same was rendered into French by the Abbe Parrand of the Academie des Arcades de Rome. Later on in 1832, Jean Penis rendered August William Von Schlegel's Latin translation into French. A selection from Friedrich Von Schlegel's text in German was translated into French by Mazuri in his Essai Sur la langue et le philosophic de Indiens (1837).

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Burnouf in his preface stressed the importance of the Orient, particularly of India due to the superiority of its race, its language and its two religions - Hinduism and Buddhism. The civilisation of India being entirely in Sanskrit, a study of this language for understanding Indian culture was a must. He, therefore, published a Sanskrit grammar, a dictionary and a text at intervals. He thus offered the Gītā to the French public as a model of Sanskrit verse and not merely as a philosophical treatise. Its second edition appeared in 1895 and the author stated in his preface that this book is probably the most beautiful which has come out from the hands of the people. The Bhagavad-gītā in his words, contains the very essence of the Brahmanical philosophy and gives us a sure-footed entry into the knowledge of India. Further, he suggests that the study of Sanskrit must not be left to students in the privacy of their own garrets, but must be publicly funded by the State. From the point of view of Real Politik it has been suggested that western interest in Hinduism and its sacred texts was prompted by the desire to govern the country more efficiently as also to provide the Christian missionaries the understanding of ancient Indian culture as might be helpful in proselytising work.

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Franz Lorinzer :

The belief in universal value, independent of time and place, was a noted phenomena in the thinking of the Rationalists and the Romantics in the mid-nineteenth century. Resemblance in scriptures was taken as the accepted voice of God, providing consensus among the votaries of the two important

religions - Christianity and Hinduism. The *Gītā* was a composite, eclectic work assimilating elements of the three philosophical schools of Vedānta, Sāṅkhya and Yoga, all under the canopy of Kṛiṣṇa-bhakti. A strong case was being made out for the principle of diffusion in matters of religion and culture and it was proposed that the *Gītā* had been compiled subsequent to the coming of Christianity in India with the Apostle Thomas in the middle of the first century A.D. This raised the question of a possible Christian influence on the *Gita*. The point was mooted by Franz in his new translation and commentary on the *Gita* - Die Bhagavad-Gītā Übersetzt Und erlaufent. Lorinser was not a Sanskritist but a theologian. He intended to produce a version adapted to the spirit of the German language. He was firmly convinced that the author of the Bhagavad Gita not only knew and frequently made use of the books of the New Testament, but that he also worked Christian ideas and views into his system. The author felt convinced that the *Gītā* which the world regarded as one of the fairest flowers of the heathen worldly wisdom, actually owed its purest and much greatly prized teachings to the New Testament. The Christian influence was more than a mere hypothesis. The contemporary Sanskrit scholars were luke-warm to Lorinser's hypothesis. Weber looked at it as subjudice, because no sound information, no documents were available in that connection. Later on, he proposed ³⁰ that the idea of Kṛiṣṇa was literally borrowed from that of Christ, as also the bhakti doctrine. The journey of the Brahmanas to Śvetadvīpa - the island of whitemen, according to him, was responsible for assimilation of two central conceptions in Hinduism, namely the worship of the invisible God, and

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the gently murmured prayer (upānsujapa). Lassen (1800-76), a Norwegian scholar, who was Professor of Indian languages and Literature at the University of Bonn, welcomed ³¹ the idea of Christian influence on the Bhagavad-gītā and the Mahābhārata through the Svetadvīpa.

Both Lorinser and Lassen are considered as conjectural in their approach. The story of Brahmins visit to Svetadvīpa is considered fantastic. It is firmly proposed ³² that instead of Bhakti being borrowed from Christianity, it was of genuine Indian origin and growth. In the words of Garbe, who contributed on 'Bhagavad-gītā' in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ³³ 'I have not been able to convince myself in reading these remarkable passages that there lies in that legend the historical kernel which Weber and Lassen believe they find in it. The story is so fantastic that I can see in it only the description of a purely mythical country of blessed creatures'. Quoting ³⁴ Barth's view that 'we have before us merely a product of poetic fancy' seems to me to be thoroughly to the point. Garbe, however, divides the Bhagavad-gītā into two portions, the earlier being theistic and the later pantheistic. In his opinion, the theistic portion has been influenced by Christianity while the pantheistic is not. He places the earlier portion in the second century BC and the later in the second century A.D.

The Decline of Western Orientalists' interest in the Gītā :

The interest of the Western Orientalists seemed to be declining between about the fifties and the eighties of the last century. They were concentrating on much older and more extensive Vedic texts. From about the 1830's Vedic texts as

also the major commentaries became available. Weber in his Indische Literatur geschichte notices 590 titles of Sanskrit books. Unlike the Transcendentalists, western orientalists became less interested in the Gītā and its message. In Weber's History of Indian Literature, published in its English translation (first edition in the fifties and the revised one in 1878), the Vedic literature and its various branches is noticed in 175 pages, compared to 13 pages accorded to the Epic poetry with the Gītā receiving only scant attention in half a dozen references. Weber no doubt touches on Lorin³⁵ser's theory of Christian influence, without actually rejecting it chronologically. He suggests that 'there was no forcible objection to it, though he clearly thinks that Lorinser had overstated his case.' The position regarding the Gītā in Indian Sanskrit Literature did not change even in 1900 as is evident in A.A. Macdonell's A History of Sanskrit Literature.³⁶ In this work more attention is paid to the Mahābhārata, but there are only passing references to the Gītā. He, however, acknowledges that 'the beauty and the power of the language of the Gītā is unsurpassed by any other work of Indian Literature'.

Monier-Williams (1819-99) :

Monier Williams, the successor of Wilson at Oxford, as Boden Professor of Sanskrit, in his Indian Wisdom³⁷ (1875) devotes 18 pages on the Gītā and that too at the very end of the chapter relating to the development of Indian religious literature, in the realm of philosophy. He did not propose any theory about the authorship of this work. He wrote, that he was 'probably a Brahman and normally a Vaiṣṇava, but really a philosopher whose mind was cast in a broad and comprehensive mould'. His

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later account provides nothing more than a summary with appropriate quotations on the contents of the Gīta. In Monier-Williams' opinion, the Bhagavad-gīta is divided into three sections, each containing six chapters, and as such the philosophical teaching is somewhat distinct in each section. The first section dwells chiefly on the benefits of the Yoga section pointing out that the asceticism of the yoga ought to be joined with action and the performance of regular caste duties, and winding up with a declaration that the grand end and aim of all asceticism is to attain that most desirable pantheistic state which enables a man to see God in everything and everything in God. In asking Arjuna, as a Kṣatriya to fight for a righteous war, an argument is drawn from the external existence of the soul.

The second division of the poem concentrates more directly on the pantheistic doctrines of the Vedānta. Kṛiṣṇa here claims adoration as the great universal spirit pervading and constituting the universe. In the footnotes, Monier-Williams compares these aspects with Christian texts, particularly the New Testament, as pointed out by Lorinser. He also draws parallel description with the Supreme Ruler in the Greek Orphic hymns, named Zeus - the first and the last, the head and the centre from whom all things have been made, the breadth of all things, the sun and moon etc. The Vision (or Revelation) of the Universal Form (Viśvarūpa darśanam) is compared to the simplicity of the Gospel scene. His face did shine as the sun, and his radiance was white as the light
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(^{Th.} Matt. XVII. 2 ; Mark IX. 3). He as well refers to several

later account provides nothing more than a summary with appropriate quotations on the contents of the text. In the first section, each containing six chapters, and as such the philosophical teaching is somewhat distinct in each section. The first section deals chiefly on the benefits of the Yoga and points out that the realization of the Yoga must be joined with action and the performance of regular duties, and winding up with a declaration that the grand aim of all asceticism is to attain that most desirable pantheistic state which enables a man to see God in everything and everything in God. In seeking Nature, as a devotee to fight for a righteous war, an ascetic is drawn from the external existence of the soul.

The second division of the book concentrates more directly on the pantheistic doctrine of the Vedas. It begins here claims asceticism as the great universal spirit pervading and constituting the universe. In the Vedas, however, Williams compares these aspects with Christian texts, particularly the New Testament, as pointed out by Emerson. He also draws parallel description with the Supreme Being in the Great Gnostic hymns, named Jesus - the first and the last, the head and the centre from whom all things have been made, the breadth of all things, the sun and moon etc. The vision (revelation) of the Universal Form (Vishvavakraman) is compared to the simplicity of the Gospel scene. His face is as the sun, and his radiance as white as the light. (Lect. XVII. 2 : Mark IX. 3). He is well referred to as

other passages including those relating to the conditions of the soul being determined before death in a future state of birth.

The third division of the poem, comprising the six last chapters, aims particularly at interweaving Sāṅkhya doctrines with the Vedānta. The Gītā accepts the doctrine of a Supreme Presiding Spirit (called Param-Brahman or Adhīyatman - XIII. 12, VIII. 1) as the first source of the universe, but asserts the eternal existence of Prakriti and Puruṣa - that is of an original eternal element and soul - both emanating from the Supreme Being (then regarded as Parā-Prakriti - Supreme Prakriti). It affirms the individuality and personality of souls and proposes that the body (kṣhetra) and all the world of sense is evolved out of Prakriti through Buddhi, Ahaṅkāra, the five subtle elements, the five grosser elements, and the eleven organs, including mind (XIII. 19 & VII. 4-6). Reference is as well made to the three guṇas - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas emanating from the Lord (VII. 12-14) all providing examples of the eclecticism of the Bhagavad-gītā. This brief survey of the Gītā is closed by three or four passages (taken from Chapters III. 27 & XIII. 29, 31) containing the gist of the entire argument reminding Arjuna of his duty as a Kṣatriya warrior. Finally, Arjuna's dialogue is dispelled. He tells the Lord that 'Now by thy favour is my conscience clear. I with thy bidding do and fight without any fear'.

Summing up, Monier-William proposes³⁹ that 'to any one who has followed me in tracing the outline of this remarkable philosophical dialogue, and has noted the numerous parallels

it offers to passages in our sacred scripture, it may seem strange that I hesitate to concur in any theory which explains these coincidences by supposing that the author had access to the New Testament or that he derived some of his ideas from the first propagators of Christianity. He, thus, ridicules the idea of indebtedness of the philosophy of the *Gītā* to the New Testament and Christianity. He further points ⁴⁰ out that the attempts of the Christian Fathers to make out Pythagoras a debtor to Herbaic wisdom, Plato as Athicizing Moses, Aristotle as a picker up of ethics from a Jew, Seneca a correspondent of St. Paul, were due, in some cases, to ignorance, and in some to a want of perfect honesty in controversial dealing. It might reasonably be questioned whether there could have been any actual contact of the Hindu systems with Christianity without a more satisfactory result in the modification of pantheistic and anti-Christian ideas.

Resemblances, thus, were not proof of influence of the kind proposed by Lorinser. Similar resemblances could be pointed out from the writings of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. In William's words, 'Lorinser had not apparently considered that 'fragments of truth are to be found in all religious systems however, false, and that Bible is a 'thoroughly oriental book cast in an oriental mould and full of oriental ideas and expressions'. Monier-William's Indian Wisdom, consisting chiefly of translated specimens of Sanskrit literature, was meant to know England and India better known to each other. He aimed at imparting to educated English men by means of translations and explanations of portions of the sacred and philosophical litera-

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ture of India, an insight into the mind, habits of thought and customs of the Hindus. He asks his country men not to forget that 'this Great Empire has been entrusted to our rule not to be the Corpus Vile of political and social experiments, nor yet for the purpose of extending our commerce, flattering our pride, or increasing our prestige but that a vast population may be conciliated, benefitted and elevated, and the regenerating influence of Christianity spread through the length and breadth of the land. This utilitarian approach sans vituperations expressed by Mill might be the result of Monier-Williams commitment to instructions enjoined in the Will of Boden relating to the foundation of the professorship of Sanskrit at Oxford.

41

Max Muller (1823-1900) :

This scholar Extraordinary a German by birth and a naturalised Englishman, was an erudite Sanskrit scholar well versed in comparative philology and languages - classical and modern European. He missed his Boden Professorship at Oxford. He was, however, compensated with the Professorship of Comparative Philology there. He did not subscribe to the German Romantic admiration for Indian Philosophy. His prime interest was in Rigveda and its commentary by Śāyana which appeared in four massive volumes between 1849 and 1862. Max Muller's attitude to the Gītā was in line with his attitude to the development of Indian language in general. It was in the degenerate period in the history of Sanskrit language that the Gītā was written. In comparison with the importance of the Veda, the Gītā, according to him, was of little practical

significance. As General Editor of the 'Sacred Book of the East', Max Muller did realize the importance of the Bhagavad-gītā as a popular and exoteric exposition of Vedantic doctrines. 42 In his Gifford Lectures at Glasgow in 1888, he referred to the Gītā on a couple of occasions though his academic interest was in Vedic literature particularly in bringing out the Rigveda edition in four volumes.

Muller also referred to Lorinser's theory of Christian influence on the Gītā. He had no strong objection to these on purely chronological grounds, but there was no necessity of admitting such influences. 'It is strange', says Max Muller, 43 that these scholars (Lorinser et al) should not see that what is natural in our country is natural in another also. If fear, reverence and worship of the Supreme God could become devotion and love for Semetic people, why not in India also ?' 44 As such, there is no way in which the Christian influence could be demonstrated, and in any case the formation of the Gītā's bhakti doctrine could be explained perfectly well without recourse to such extreme theories.

Gītā and the Sacred Books of the East - Telang : 45

The importance of the Gītā in the big project entitled 'Sacred Books of the East' was well realized by Max Muller, the General Editor. Its translation was entrusted to an Indian scholar - Kāshinath Trayambak Telang, who had earlier in 1875 produced a western-style verse translation of the poem with a lengthy introduction. In 1875, Telang wrote, 'My view is that in the Gītā and the Upanishads, the philosophical part has not been consistently and fully worked out. We have these the

significance. The general failure of the sacred book of the East, Max Müller did realize the importance of the Vedas. In his famous lectures at Glasgow in 1857, he referred to the Vedas as a popular and exotic expansion of the Vedas. On a couple of occasions through the academic interest in Vedic literature particularly in England and the Western world in four volumes.

Müller also referred to the Vedas as a popular and exotic expansion of the Vedas. He had no strong objection to these on purely chronological grounds, but there was no necessity of admitting such influences. It is strange, says Max Müller, that these Vedas (Lindner et al.) should not see that what is natural to our country is natural in another also. It is a reverence and worship of the Vedas which has become devotion and love for Semitic people, why not in India also? As there is no way in which the Christian influence could be demonstrated, and in any case the formation of the Vedas is a doctrine could be explained perfectly well without recourse to such extreme theories.

45

The importance of the Vedas in the sacred books of the East - India

The importance of the Vedas in the sacred books of the East, was well realized by Max Müller. The translation was entrusted to an Indian scholar - Kashinath Tripathi, who had earlier in 1857 produced a western-style verse translation of the Vedas with an introductory introduction. In 1857, India was in the hands of the British, the philosophical part had been conscientiously and fully worked out. We have these

results of free thought, exercised on different subjects of great moment, unfettered by the exigencies of any fully developed theory'. Telang refers to confirmation of his views in Max Muller's Gifford Lectures that 'there is not what may be called a philosophical system in these upanishads'. According to his view point ⁴⁶ (p. 13), the *Gītā* is a non-systematic work, and in that respect belongs to the same class as the older upanishads. Further, on grounds of style, the *Gītā* is removed by a considerable linguistic and chronological distance from classical Sanskrit literature, and nearly contemporaneous with the Upanishad literature. The two as well teach that there is no hope of salvation and deliverance except by the individual self, recognising the true universal self and finding rest there where alone rest can be found. ⁴⁷ The *Gītā* and the Upanishad can be grouped together regarding the essential teachings of both. Telang places the *Gītā* at the close of this epoch, as one of the youngest members of the group to which it belongs. He takes the second century B.C. as a terminus before which the *Gītā* must have been composed.

Telang in the Introduction part as well discusses several points including the relation of the *Gītā* with the Vedas, reference to the division of society resting on difference of qualities and duties. It does not absolutely reject the Vedas, but it shelves them. So also the *Gītā* does not totally root out caste. It places caste on less untenable basis. Telang does not see any indication in the *Gītā* of an attempt to comprise with a powerful attack on the old Hindu system. On internal grounds, Telang thinks it Pre-Buddhist, though not necessarily earlier than the Buddha. In his words, 'the Upanishads, with

the idea and the precepts of Buddha appear to me to be the
 successive embodiments of the spiritual thought of the age,
 as it became more and more dissociated from the ideas of
 mere ceremonial than of the philosophy of the Upanishads and the idea, and the philosophy of
 the Buddha constitute a regular intellectual progression.
 Finally, in Telang's words, once again, the philosophy, the
 mode of treating the subject, the style, the language, the
 verification, the opinions on sandy subjects of the highest
 importance, all point to one conclusion. It is more than
 probable that the latest date at which the idea can have been
 composed will be earlier than the third century B.C., though
 it is altogether impossible to say at present how much earlier.
 This proposition too is supported by the cumulative strength
 of several independent lines of testimony.

John Davies and Edwin Arnold

John Davies and Arnold are noted for their translation
 of the *Upanishads*. In preparing to write his version, Arnold
 depended mainly on the English translation of John Davies,
 published in 1882, which he stated to be truly beyond question
 for its fidelity and character. Davies provides a good intro-
 duction and acknowledges his indebtedness to the Greek trans-
 lation of Balzano and the Italian version of Stanislas Jalil.
 Both suggested to him by the Indian office librarian, Balzano
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 and the English version of Thomson. While he makes no comment on Telang's translation
 but about Thomson's one published in 1876, he notices some

the Gītā and the precepts of Buddha appear to me to be the successive embodiments of the spiritual thought of the age, as it became more and more dissatisfied with the system of mere ceremonial than dominant.⁴⁸ The old system, the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Gītā, and the philosophy of the Buddha constitute a regular intelligible progression. Finally, in Telang's words, once again, 'its philosophy, its mode of treating its subject, its style, its language, its versification, its opinions on sundry subjects of the highest importance, all point to one conclusion. It is more than probable that the latest date at which the Gītā can have been composed must be earlier than the third century B.C., though it is altogether impossible to say at present how much earlier'.⁴⁹ This proposition too is supported by the cumulative strength of several independent lines of testimony.

John Davies and Edwin Arnold :

Both Davies and Arnold are noted for their translation of the Bhagavad-gītā. In preparing to write his version, Arnold depended mainly on the English translation of John Davies, published in 1882⁵⁰ which he stated to be truly beyond praise for its fidelity and character. Davies provides a good introduction and acknowledges his indebtedness to the Greek translation of Galanos and the Italian version of Stanislao Galli, both supplied to him by the Indian office Librarian, Reinhold Rost. He as well consulted the French version of Burnouf, the Latin version of Lassen, and the English versions of Thomson and Telang. While he makes no comment on Telang's translation, but about Thomson's one published in 1855, he notices many

errors which he records in the Introduction. The notes of Lassen provided valuable aid to Davies as also the paper read by W. Von Humboldt on the Bhagavad-gītā read before the Akademie der Wissen Chaften of Berlin in 1826 for the scholarly review of the doctrines contained in the poem. He as well consulted the Sanskrit commentary on the Gītā in Manuscript by Śrīdhara, another one attributed to Śaṅkara, written by Śaṅkara. Ānanda Saraswatī, called Tātparya-Bodhiṇī. Davies' translation carries with it useful and informative notes on different matters of philosophical interest and he also notices parallel references from western philosophy including the ancient Greek texts.

In Appendix I,⁵¹ Davies critically examines Lorinser's view point on the date at which the Bhagavad-gītā was probably written, and on the theory that it was written under an influence derived from a knowledge of Christian Doctrines. He also questions Telang's contention that the Bhagavad-gītā's antiquity extended to so far back as the fourth century B.C. or even to an earlier date. Lorinser had arranged the passages under three divisions - (1) those which vary in expression but agree in meaning ; (2) those in which a characteristic expression of the New Testament is found but with a different sense ; (3) those in which expression and meaning agree. In Davies view it must be admitted that the passages composed in parts (1) and (2) do not establish Lorinser's proposition. Comparing St. Paul's words, 'The fire shall try everyman's work of what sort it is .. if any man's be burned he shall suffer loss (1 Cor. iii. 13, 15) with those of Kriṣṇa, 'As a fire, when kindled, burns fuel into ashes, so the fire of knowledge burns work into ashes. The expressions in Davies' view are such as would naturally arise

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from the conditions of thought and purpose in several writers without any thought of one with the other. In the third class there are some passages which seem to favour Lorinser's theory, but the similarity is not such as to compel an absolute assent to the inference of a Christian origin for the Hindu ideas. Finally, he suggests that 'we require more evidence on the subject than we have at present before the question be fully answered.

Davies as well provides philological notes under each chapter on various words and phrases and suggests probable explanations in terms of their occurrence in other Sanskrit texts. Here he quotes views of other scholars who translated the poem in other European languages, Latin, German and French. Roth and Bothlink's St. Petersburg Dictionary in 7 volumes is as well quoted. This gives a critical touch to his philological notes. On the whole, this small book of John Davies in 152 pages is extremely useful and informative and sheds light on the eclectic philosophy on the Bhagavad-gītā.

⁵²
Edwin Arnold ⁵² noted for his poem on the Buddha 'The Light of Asia' (1879) 'as a token of his liberalism in religious matters, had an other feather to his cap with the publication of the translation of the Bhagavad-gītā in blank verse, entitled 'The Song Celestial'. Described as one of the 'Five jewels - Pañca-ratnam of Devanāgarī literature in plain but noble language, it unfolds a philosophical system which according to Arnold, 'remains to this day the prevailing Brahmanic belief, blending as it does the doctrines of Kapila, Patañjali and the Vedas'.
⁵³
In his words, once again, 'so lofty are many of its declarations, so sublime its aspirations, so pure and tender its piety that

from the conditions of thought and action in several instances without any thought of one with the other. In the third class there are some passages which seem to favour London's theory but the similarity is not such as to compel in every case to the inference of a Christian origin of the story. Finally, he suggests that 'no genuine Sanskrit culture on the subject than we have at present before the question is fully answered.

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David Arnold noted for his work on the Buddha's 'The Light of Asia' (1890) 'as a token of his liberalism in religion', had an other feather to his cap with the publication of the translation of the Shagvada-Iti in blank verse, entitled 'The Song Celestial'. Described as one of the 'five jewels' of the Samyag-dharma of Buddhism literature in plain and noble language, it unfolds a philosophical system which according to Arnold 'belongs to this day the prevailing Brahmanic belief, blind as it does the doctrines of Karma, Patala and the Vedas'. In his words, 'once again, we look and wonder the play of the soul in the Shagvada-Iti, so pure and tender the play of

Schlegel after his study of the poem, breaks forth into burst of delight and praise towards its unknown author. Arnold as well makes reference to Lassen's splending tribute to the poem for its moralities as also close parallelism between its teachings and those of the New Testament. This English Celebrity, however, places the composition of this poem at about the third century after Christ, and according to him, perhaps there are really echoes in this Brahmanic poem of the lessons of Galilee and of the Syrian incarnation.

In the Introduction part, the story of the poem is traced by the author in a couple of pages, followed by the Message of the Gita - A treatise on Yoga. Kṛiṣṇa is represented as an historical individual as also as an incarnation of Viṣṇu who manifests himself whenever Evil becomes a dominant trend in the world. He is the manifestation of the Eternal ; He is in the indwelling spirit, everywhere and in each one of us as ready to speak to us now as he ever has been. The discourse in eighteen chapters covers every phase of ethical and moral questions concerning the philosophy of life, the duty of man, the need for detachment, the nature of Time, Life, Immortality, of what is good and what is evil. It highlights at the beginning 'that the end of death is birth and the end of birth is death, that what lives in the soul, impenetrable, unentered, unassailable, unharmed, untouched, immortal ; that man's soul lives for ever and as such no one could really be slain. The Gītā deals with the Yoga of action, justification of rituals and sacrifices, and the many manifestations of God in the physical world. The long poem ends with the injunction that Lord Kṛiṣṇa

Schöel after his study of the poem, breaks forth into bursts of delight and praise towards its unknown author. Arnold as well makes reference to Latham's splendid tribute to the poem for its moralities as also close parallels between the teachings and those of the New Testament. This English scholar however, places the composition of this poem at about the first century after Christ, and according to him, perhaps there are really echoes in this dramatic poem of the lessons of Calvary and of the Syrian incarnation.

In the introduction part, the story of the poem is traced by the author in a couple of stanzas, followed by the Message of the Vita - A treatise on Yoga. Krishna is presented as an historical individual as also as an incarnation of Vishnu who manifests himself whenever Evil becomes a dominant trend in the world. He is the manifestation of the Eternal & He is in the Indwelling spirit, everywhere and in each one of us and ready to speak to us now as he ever has been. The discourse in eighteen chapters covers every phase of ethical and moral questions concerning the philosophy of life, the duty of man, the need for detachment, the nature of time, life, immortality, of what is good and what is evil. It highlights at the end that the end of death is birth and the end of birth is death that what lives in the soul, indestructible, unchanging, unassailable, unharnessed, untouched, immortal & that man's soul lives for ever and as such no one could really be slain. The Vita deals with the Yoga of action, justification of rituals and sacrifices, and the many manifestations of God in the physical world. The long poem ends with the injunction that Lord

is the refuge to whom people of all classes go and find peace and salvation. And it is this quintessence of philosophy, in the words of Arnold, which forms the contents of the Bhagavad-Gītā'.

Further, the Gītā is a comprehensive treatise on Yoga, dealing, as it does, with the various phrase of the soul's development and communion with the Supreme Being. The word 'Yoga' is used in the context of 'inner discipline' which leads to the liberation of the soul and a new understanding of the unity and meaning of mankind. Different aspects of yoga are special applications of the inner discipline, aiming at liberation through knowledge (jñānayoga), devotion (bhakti-yoga) and action (karmayoga). The inner discipline harnesses the psychic powers and energies through intensive concentration of personality over-shadowing the narrow ego of the self, to achieve the transcendental One. This, according to Arnold, is the Message of the Gita.

The period between 1785-19th. when Wilkins published his English translation of the Bhagavad-gita, and the last one of the 19th century by Edwin Arnold, published in 1885 is noted for attempts made by several scholars to understand the message of the Gītā in a wider perspective. The pronouncement of Warren Hastings in placing the Geetā a performance of great originality, of a sublimity of conception, reasoning, and diction, almost unequalled, and a single exception, among all the known religions of man kind, of a theology accurately corresponding with that of the Christian dispensation, and most powerfully illustrating its fundamental doctrines, was

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equally, rather universally, shared by the succeeding commentators on the Bhagavad-gītā. While the date of this long poem remained unsettled, it was supposed to have begun as a upanishad. Its philosophical and religious foundations were seemingly Vedantic, though it had afterwards elements of Sāṅkhya yoga and Bhakti incorporated into it. The challenge posed by some western scholars regarding its late composition sometime in the third century A.D., with a good bit of Christian influence, particularly from the New Testament, was effectively met in the period following by Indian scholars. The shift from West to East in the land of its origin, of the interpretation of Gītā's Message - philosophical and ethical - was notable from the early part of the twentieth century with the contribution of nationalists Indians like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Gandhi, to philosophers like Ranade, Radhakrishnan, S.N. Dasgupta & M. Hiriyanna and propagators of the emergent new-Hinduism by saints like Vivekanand, Sivananda, Bhakti Vedanta, Mahesh Yogi and others. The West, too, had not slowed down its interest in the Gītā and its message and philosophy, as is evident from the contributions of Barnett, Edgerton and Z^{ae}iner, Otto Ra^uns and several others in the second half of the twentieth century. A survey of the Gītā study in the twentieth century would be more appropriate in the context of contributions of Eastern and Western scholars separately.

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50.	General	pp. 491-500
51.	General	pp. 501-510
52.	General	pp. 511-520
53.	General	pp. 521-530
54.	General	pp. 531-540
55.	General	pp. 541-550
56.	General	pp. 551-560
57.	General	pp. 561-570
58.	General	pp. 571-580
59.	General	pp. 581-590
60.	General	pp. 591-600
61.	General	pp. 601-610
62.	General	pp. 611-620
63.	General	pp. 621-630
64.	General	pp. 631-640
65.	General	pp. 641-650
66.	General	pp. 651-660
67.	General	pp. 661-670
68.	General	pp. 671-680
69.	General	pp. 681-690
70.	General	pp. 691-700
71.	General	pp. 701-710
72.	General	pp. 711-720
73.	General	pp. 721-730
74.	General	pp. 731-740
75.	General	pp. 741-750
76.	General	pp. 751-760
77.	General	pp. 761-770
78.	General	pp. 771-780
79.	General	pp. 781-790
80.	General	pp. 791-800
81.	General	pp. 801-810
82.	General	pp. 811-820
83.	General	pp. 821-830
84.	General	pp. 831-840
85.	General	pp. 841-850
86.	General	pp. 851-860
87.	General	pp. 861-870
88.	General	pp. 871-880
89.	General	pp. 881-890
90.	General	pp. 891-900
91.	General	pp. 901-910
92.	General	pp. 911-920
93.	General	pp. 921-930
94.	General	pp. 931-940
95.	General	pp. 941-950
96.	General	pp. 951-960
97.	General	pp. 961-970
98.	General	pp. 971-980
99.	General	pp. 981-990
100.	General	pp. 991-1000

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CHAPTER IV

THE INDIAN PHASE IN GITA STUDY
(19th & 20th centuries)

The modern Indian phase of Gītā study is supposed to have begun in the eighties of the last century. It is characterised as an offshoot of Renaissance, Radicalism and Theosophy. The creation of a neo-literate class with the background of western education through the medium of English language aroused the curiosity of this section to look to its past for inspiration. The birth of the national sentiment and the need for religious reform were contributory factors towards the urge for freedom, social elevation and academic growth. The Hindu world of ideas needed a force to generate the intellectual, political and spiritual urge of the newly formed elite class and the Bhagavad-gita provided the basis for it. As the Bible was for the Christians, the Quran for the Muslims, the Gītā was accepted by the Hindus as the philosophy of life and action. Swami Vivekanand, representing Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 rendered Hinduism as a set of relatively simple but all-embracing principles, and these were provided by the Gītā. The Kṛiṣṇa of the Bhagavad-Gītā rendered the highest thought and the most profound wisdom to the intellectual class of Indians. As suggested by C.F. Andrews, ¹ 'within living memory, the Gītā, which a century ago was scarcely known outside the learned circle of the pandits, has been elevated from the position of comparative obscurity to that of a common and well-read scripture for the whole of educated India'. The Kṛiṣṇa of the Bhagavad-Gītā afforded the highest thought and the most profound wisdom to the newly educated class of Indians

THE INDIAN PHASE IN THE GITA
(1911) A. J. B. S. S.

The modern Indian phase of this study is supposed to have begun in the middle of the last century. It is characterised as an offspring of Renaissance, National and Theosophy. The creation of a neo-Hinduism class with the background of western education through the action of English language aroused the necessity of this section to look to the past for inspiration. The birth of the national sentiment and the need for religious reform were contributory factors towards the urge for freedom, social elevation and economic growth. The Hindu world of ideas needed a force to generate the intellectual, political and spiritual urge of the newly formed elite class and the Bhagavad-Gita provided the basis for it. As the Bible was for the Christians, the Gita for the Hindus. The Gita was accepted by the Hindus as the philosophy of life and action. Swami Vivekananda, representing Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 rendered Hinduism as a set of relatively simple but all-embracing principles, and these were provided by the Gita. The Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita rendered the highest thought and the most profound wisdom to the intellectual class of Indians. As suggested by C. L. Andrews, 'within living memory the Gita, which a century ago was scarcely known outside the learned circle of the pandits, has been elevated from the position of comparative obscurity to that of a common and well-read scripture for the whole of educated India. The Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita afforded the highest thought and the most profound wisdom to the newly educated class of Indians.'

with English as the medium of communication. With Kṛiṣṇa as the Divine Lord, the Holy Mother for the Hindus was the Motherland, the supreme Śakti or power - Bhāratamātā - Motherland - became the gospel of religion as might be apparent from the following song symbolising anguish in the patriots heart at the condition of the Mother :

'O India, gloomy is thy face,
Beautiful that was as the moon,
Tears flow from thine eyes,
Throughout the day and night.' ²

The intelligentsia class as well claimed the superiority of Hindu religion and culture over European and Christian theology and civilization. 'Hinduism', in the words of Raj Narain Bose, ³ a product of western education went a step further. In his words, 'Hinduism presented a much higher social idealism, not withstanding its outer distinctions of castes, than ever reached by Christiandom'. The national awakening in Bengal around the early eighties of the last century was a combination of several facts and forces - the emergence of the new generation of English-educated Indian conscious of their glorial past, the love for their motherland and the fundamental ⁴ unity of the country. Bankin Chandra Chatterji, author of Anandamatha and its famous Bandematram song, as well wrote Kṛiṣṇacharitra depicting him as the 'Ideal man'. Kṛiṣṇa was presented as a hero, a philosopher - statesman, an example of emulation, and above all, as the spiritual champion of the ⁵ people of India in her time of trial. This period of trial could roughly be between the Passing of the Ilbert Bill (1883)

with English as the medium of communication. The English as the divine word, the Holy Mother for the English was the Mother-land, the supreme Gauri of power - Motherland - became the gospel of religion as might be apparent from the following some symbolical English in the poet's heart at the conclusion of the Mother:

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and the Partition of Bengal (1905). Throughout these years of more than two decades, the *Gītā* served as an inspiration and an exaltation for selfless service to the country and its people. 'The Song Celestial' afforded an intellectual along with an emotional justification for political action and agitation against the British rule.

At the other end in Western India, the Maharastrian movement against alien rule was led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920). It had a military tradition with stress on qualities of bravery, physical strength, warfare, and finally aimed at independence from alien rule. Tilak proposed that 'Freedom is our birth right and we shall have it'. He was greatly inspired by the precepts of the *Gītā* justifying killing one's near one's for a righteous cause. On this basis he justified the action of Shivaji in killing his adversary Afzal Khan.⁶ In his words, 'Great men are above the common principles of morality. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being motivated by a desire to reap the fruit of his deeds. Do not subscribe your vision like a frog in a well. Get out of the Penal Code, enter into the extremely high atmosphere of the Bhagavad-Gītā, and then consider the actions of great men. Tilak had not actually motivated anyone in this violent way, but the possible implications landed Tilak in jail for eighteen months. The use of violence for a righteous cause like protection of women and children, in self-defence or an assassin, does not incur any guilt on the person committing such an act, is as well confirmed by Manu. (VIII. 348-51).

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(Will. 343-51).

Tilak's exposition of these principles finally resulted in his massive commentary on the Gītā entitled Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā Rahasya.⁷ It was written in the period of his exile in Burma in late 1911 and early 1912 in about five months time (2nd November to March 30th). In his preface (original in Marathi ed.) Tilak affirms his conviction that the original Gītā did not preach the Philosophy of Renunciation (nivritti) but of Energism (Karmayoga); and that possibly the single word 'Yoga' used in the Gītā had been used to mean Karmayoga. According to the philosophy of the Gītā, it is the primary duty of every human being in this world to acquire the knowledge of the pure form of Paramēśvara (God), and thereby to cleanse out and purify his own Reason as far as possible. The Karmayoga is founded on knowledge in which Devotion is the principal factor. No man is free from Action, and that Action should never be given up. The Gītā has shown which path of life should be adopted by a man by properly harmonising knowledge (jñāna), Renunciation (Sāmyāsa), Right Action (Karma) and Devotion (Bhakti). The Gītā, in the words of Tilak, 'is essentially a treatise on Right or Proper Action (Karmayoga)'. In his theory of jñāna ottara karma and by his sympathy with the theory of jñāna-karma-samuccaya, Tilak tries to prove the superiority of 'Karma'. Further, according to him, the essential nature of Bhakti consists in doing actions in a devotional spirit, while in regard to Yoga he tells us that no real Karma is possible unless we possess the Yogic equanimity.

Tilak as well brings out the ethical doctrines of the Bhagavad-gītā in relation to those of the European moralists -

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 with the theory of Jnana - Vairagya - Bhakti. Tilak takes to mean
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Tilak as well points out the ethical foundation of the
 philosophy.

Aristotle and Kant ; Schopenhauer and Nietzsche ; Martineau and Green; and finally Spencer and Sidgwick. Aristotle places the life of activity above the life of contemplation. He, however, believes in the 'Intellectual Love of God'. He takes 'Divine theoria' as an ideal, but none but God can live in mere contemplation alone. It is only when we contemplate scientifically, philosophically, intuitionally and on a higher plane that our mind can go up to theoria. An impersonal pursuit like that of scientific or philosophic contemplation could to a certain extent follow the 'Divine theoria'. Kant suggests that there are three essential ideas : the soul as a thinking substance, the world as the totality of all phenomena, and God as the absolute perfect being. These ideas, however, exist only in the mind. Kant is more of an idealist than a materialist. The supreme rule guides our conduct, corresponding to the Gītā's concept of performing duty for duty sake (Kāryam - ity eva yat karma miyatān kriyate' rjuna).

The next group of moralists Schopenhauer and Nietzsche represent the Sanyāsamārga and the Karmamārga respectively. The former's great work 'The World as Will and Idea' suggests the negation of the world as Idea, and its affirmation as Will. The Will is the unconscious force which governs the development of the whole of nature, inorganic and organic. True morality consists only in the negation of Will. This German philosopher could not extricate himself from the doctrine of pessimism. He was, no doubt, fascinated by the Upanishads as he categorically remarks, 'the Upanishads have been the solace of my life' and 'the Upanishads would be the solace of my death'. Nietzsche called the ethics of Christianity as docile, an ethics of humi-

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(Kāyān - Iy eva yat kāyā nivāṣaṣṭi rājan.)

The next group of moralists Schopenhauer and Nietzsche
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lity, submission and surrender. He stood for force and the survival of the strong. When the weak survive and the strong are eliminated we get, what he calls, 'a dysgenic spectacle' which leads to the destruction of the world. Nietzsche talks of the superman who rises above good and bad. He talks of master-morality, reminding one of the āsuri-sampat in the XVIth Chapter of the Gītā. Nietzsche talked about a Godless world, declaring 'That God is dead' but still believed in the possibility of rebirth. He did not believe in God like any Sāṅkhya philosopher, but still accepted the existence of the soul.

9

Martineau and Green were other mortalists - rather contemporaries of the last century. The former is famous for introducing the idea of 'springs of action' and in his Ethics he talks of conscience as a psycho-ethical concept and neither a moral nor a spiritual one. He speaks of all the conscience as being the aspects of one Supreme One. Green stands for the idea of the self, which is closer to the doctrine of self in Indian thought, particularly in the Bhagavad-Gītā. He as well develops the concept of moral consciousness and its application to social welfare. Further, he talks of spiritual principle in man leading to his perfection as also that of society. The nature of man, the nature of society and finally the nature of God as projected by Green, come closer to the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gītā in its metaphysical aspect. So also in the treatment of ethical problems, Green is closer to the view point of the Gītā. His final message to the people about the life after death based on a passage from the Bible, conforms to that in the Gītā. Both aim at merging self with

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the Supreme Spirit. Om ity ekākṣaram brahma vyāharan mām-
anusmaran ; yah prayāti tyājan deham sa yāti paramām gatim -
Gita. VIII. 13.

The last group of European moralists namely Spencer and Sidgwick are as well taken into consideration¹⁰ on the law of Truth and morality. Regarding truth, Spencer suggests that no truth - speaking is desirable in a community of Cannibals, the treacherous and the unscrupulous Truth-speaking has no value at all in such bad situations and surroundings, although truth in itself is to be regarded as a great ethical virtue. Sidgwick proposes that no truth-speaking person should be allowed with children, mad men, invalids, people in a moral condition, enemies, robbers or such others who ask questions which they are not entitled to do. Kant, however, suggests that we should always speak the truth, even though people might come to deceive you. Ranade in an analysis of the controversy relating to the denial of truth-speaking as a virtuous among scholars and thinkers, points¹¹ out that Tilak followed the ethical thought represented by Spencer and Sidgwick, While Gandhi subscribed to the view of Christ and Kant. If a man lifts his sword against you, it is your duty to do likewise (Sathān prati sathyam). On the other hand, the ethics of sathān prati sathyam implies that far from retaliation, your self-sacrifice, your self-negation, your assertion and recognition of the presence of self in others would curb the evil design of your antagonist. The latter course of resorting to the path of truth and peace instead of using force and retribution, is endorsed by Kant and Gandhi. Despite the

the Supreme Spirit. In its essence, truth is a unity and
anuragat : yah pravastu yajam yajam as yajam yajam
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 to the path of truth and peace instead of using force and
 retribution, is endorsed by Kant and Gandhi. Despite the

differences in approach, non-attachment (anāśakti) is common to both.

The outstanding points in Tilak's Gīta-Rahasya are as well brought out by R.D. Ranade,¹² under different titles namely Jñāna - Bhakti and Yoga in relation to Karma which he considers to be the kernel point of the commentary. Ranade mentions five points which may be regarded as the great contribution of Tilak to the interpretation of the Bhagavad-gītā. Tilak calls Karmayoga as the essence of the Gīta. Both Jñāna (Knowledge) and Bhakti (Devotion) point to Karma as the ultimate goal of life. The intellectual scheme of oneness, the devotional scheme of love and the meditating scheme of mental equipoise are directed towards the achievement of the ultimate end of human life, namely action. Jñāna is a means of the achievement of Karma. Its two facets are intellectual and mystical, beyond which there is nothing else to be known. (Yat-jñātva néha bhūyo'nyaj jñātavyam avaśisyate - VII. 2) Referring to the controversy around two points regarding the possibility of jñānottara Karma and of Karma-samuccaya, Tilak contradicts Śāṅkara that Karma after Jñāna is an impossibility. He suggests that Karma must be done even after Jñāna. Further, regarding the impossibility of the two, Tilak takes it to be absolutely real. The two are essential elements, with Karma in itself being higher than both. It is, however, necessary to combine the two. While Śāṅkarācārya stressed on the uniqueness of Jñāna, uncontaminated by Karma, but he himself was the greatest intellectual activist, propagating his message of one God, one world and one Humanity throughout the country.

difference in approach, non-alignment, is common to both.
 The outstanding points in Tilak's Upanishads are as well brought out by R. S. Ranade, namely Jñāna - Bhakti and Yoga in relation to Karma which he considers to be the kernel point of the controversy. Ranade mentions five points which may be regarded as the great contribution of Tilak to the interpretation of the Upanishads. Tilak calls Karmayoga as the essence of the Upanishads. Both Jñāna (Knowledge) and Bhakti (Devotion) point to Karma as the ultimate goal of life. The intellectual scheme of Upanishads, the devotional scheme of love and the meditative scheme of mental equipoise are directed towards the achievement of the ultimate end of human life, namely action. Jñāna is a means of the achievement of Karma. The two facets are intellectual and mystical, beyond which there is nothing else to be known. (Yat-jñānaṁ karmāṇāṁ pāpānāṁ mokṣaḥ - VII. 2) Referring to the controversy around two points regarding the possibility of inertness and of Karma-samuccaya, Tilak contradicts Bankim that Karma after Jñāna is an impossibility. He suggests that Karma must be done even after Jñāna. Further, regarding the impossibility of the two, Tilak takes it to be absolutely real. The two are essential elements, with Karma in itself being higher than both. It is, however, necessary to combine the two. While Bankim is stressed on the union of Jñāna, uncontaminated by Karma, but he himself was the greatest intellectual activist, propagating his message of one God, one world and one humanity throughout the country.

Tilak as well suggests¹³ that the requirements of Patañjali's yoga as well as its achievements are all to be utilized for the sake of Karma. It is for the achievement of that moral equipoise which is essential for the accomplishment of any great work. In fact, in Tilak's Gītārahasya it is the 'Karmayoga' which dominates from beginning to end. The utility of Yoga, according to the Bhagavad-gītā, is only for the achievement of the mental equipoise. This alone ensures success in any undertaking including the realisation of God Himself. Tilak as well refers¹⁴ to Bhakti as an essential part for the fulfilment of any mission in life. The devotee of God could as well be regarded as greatly contributing to the life of action in this world. In this connection he refers to the role of Tukārama and Purandara-dāsa who devoted their entire life for the spiritual uplift of humanity. Rāmānuja and Ekanātha concentrated on social reform, while Nanaka and Ramadasa generated political awakening. Jñānesvara and Kabir utilized their devotional aptitude for the moral elevation of the people through righteousness and good conduct and faith in God.

Tilak, however, places realization as being higher than service. He recognises the value of self-realization and prefers ātma-kalyāna or the realisation of the Ātman as of higher consequence than either samāja-dharma or sarvabhūta-hita - social justice or welfare of all, though this view is not consistently maintained by him. Tilak also quotes the verse from the Jaimini-Sūtra (I.2) which runs as follows: Upakramo pasamhāra abhyāso apūrvata phalam, arthavādopapathi ca lingam tātparya nirnaye.¹⁵ The verse notices the seven

It is the Karma-yoga which liberates from beginning to end.
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 is not satisfactorily explained by him. It is also noted
 the verse from the Taittiriya-Sutra (1.1.1) which runs as follows:
Atmano mamaka, Atmano mamaka, Atmano mamaka.
 The verse indicates the unity

ingredients in a book for assessing its value. The beginning (upakrama) and end (upasāmhāra) of the book to determine its purport, reasons in support of it (abhyāsa), its novelty (apūrvata) and the effect (phala) of it. The truthfulness of the statement made in support (arthavāda) and refutation of contradictory arguments (upapatti). As such, the true purport of the Gītā lies in its consistency with the beginning (upakrama) and conclusion (upasāmhāra) of the text. The Lord shows reason at every stage in his preaching and enjoins Arjuna to fight with a disinterested frame of mind or 'Perform Action'. This is perfectly clear from repeated references to tasmid yudhyasva Bhavata - therefore, O Arjuna fight (G1. 2.18), or tasmāt utistha kaunteya yuddhaya kritaniscayah therefore determine to fight. In the words of Tilak, ¹⁶ 'I do not say that the Gītā has not preached Vedānta or Devotion or the Patāñjala-yoga et all. But the combination of these three subjects which has been made by the Gītā, must be such that thereby Arjuna, who was on the horns of a terrible dilemma of conflicting principles of morality, could find a sinless path of duty and feel inclined to perform the duties enjoined on him as a warrior. It is perfectly clear that the proper preaching in this place would be of Energism (pravritti) and all other things are auxillaries. Tilak emphatically points out that no commentator has properly explained what this Energestic purport is and how that implied moral can be authoritatively based on Vedānta philosophy. The upakrama, the upsamhāra and the phala are completely ignored by the commentator engrossed in discussing from Renunciatory point of view the teaching of the Gītā about the Realization

of the Brahman or about Devotional support to their respective cult. No link, as such, is established between Knowledge and Devotion on the one hand and Action (Karma) on the other hand. According to Tilak,¹⁷ all the statements, deductions or chapters in the Gītā can be explained as being connected together on the basis of the philosophy of Energism (Karma), and there is complete consistency in the work. The Karma-yoga is the be-all and the end-all of its teaching. With Karmayoga, the Bhagavad-gītā begins, with Karmayoga the Bhagavad-gītā ends, and it is Karmayoga which pervades the Bhagavad-gītā. Ranade in his reference to the contribution of Tilak, however, points¹⁸ out that the novelty or originality (apūrvata) as a constituent of any work, in the case of the Gītā, is God-realization. The Bhagavad-gītā, according to him, is one of the greatest works on mysticism that the world has ever seen and when God-realization has been duly stressed, everything else will follow in its wake.

Gandhi and Anāsakti Yoga :¹⁹

Gandhi's interest in the Bhagavad-gita was created by his two English friends who read the Gītā in Edwin Arnold's English translation, with him. Gandhi had no doubt elementary knowledge of Sanskrit, while the two English friends had to content themselves with the translation. According to Gandhi's Introduction,²⁰ 'the last nineteen stanzas of Chapter II remained engraved in his heart. These embody the highest knowledge. The principles enunciated in these are immutable while the intellect involved is discipline to some noble purpose. The knowledge contained in the stanzas is the fruit of experience.' This was his first introduction to the Gītā, which he read many

times later on along with translations and commentaries. Gandhi contends that any one venturing to interpret the Shāstras must undergo the requisite discipline in his life. Those devoid of this spirit and lacking in faith are not qualified to explain the meaning of the Shāstras. He stresses on non-violence as the highest truth, as also its supreme fruit. This spirit of non-violence alone, according to him, will reveal the true meaning of the Shastras. The vows of brahmacharya, non-stealing and non-possession are of importance for the sake of non-violence, helping one to realize it in oneself. It is the life-breath of truth.

Examining the Gītā, its subject matter is simply the realization of Brahman and the means thereto ; the battle is only the occasion for its teaching. The over-all teaching of the Gītā, according to Gandhi, is not violence but non-violence as is evident from the argument beginning in chapter II and ending in chapter XVIII. According to Gandhi, 'to conclude that the Gītā teaches violence or justifies war is unwarranted. Kriṣṇa is the Lord dwelling in everyone's heart, and the battlefield is our body. Duryodhana and his supporters stand for satayic impulses in us, and Arjuna and others stand for Godward impulses. There is an eternal conflict going on within us and Lord Kriṣṇa's dwelling in the heart prompts in a pure chitta like clock ticking in a room. The wounding of the clock is done with the key of self-purification without dislocating the indwelling Lord inside our body.

According to Gandhi, violence has no place at all in the teaching of the Gītā. There is only one dharma with its basis of non-violence, meaning moksha - the realization of Satya-

times later on along with the... contends that any one venturing to... undergo the requisite discipline in his life... this spirit and lacking in faith are not qualified to explain... the meaning of the Shastras. He stresses on non-violence as the... highest truth, as also its supreme fruit. This spirit of non-... violence alone, according to him, will reveal the true meaning... of the Shastras. The view of... non-violence and... helping one to realize it in oneself. It is the life-... of truth.

Examining the Gita, the subject matter is chiefly the... realization of Brahman and the means thereto: the path is... only the realization of its teaching. The overall teaching of... the Gita, according to Gandhi, is not violence but non-violence... as is evident from the argument beginning in chapter II and... ending in chapter XVIII. According to Gandhi, the conclusion... that the Gita teaches violence or justified war is unwarranted... Krishna is the Lord dwelling in everyone's heart, and the path... field is our body. Our actions and his supporters stand for... selfish impulses in us, and actions and others stand for Godward... impulses. There is an eternal conflict going on within us and... Lord Krishna's dwelling in the heart propels in a pure... like clock ticking in a room. The meaning of the clock is not... with the key of self-purification without dislocating the... dwelling Lord inside our body.

According to Gandhi, violence has no place at all in... the teaching of the Gita. There is only one dharm with its... basis of non-violence, meaning peace.

nārāyaṇa - the True Lord. This dharma does not under any circumstances countenance running away in fear like cowards. God, as the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer of the Universe does not kill nor violates the law of inevitable death for one born in this world. He is merciful and if He were to ignore us then our destiny is sealed.

Gandhi's assessment of the Gītā and its interpretation is briefly considered by R.D. Ranade²¹ in the context of his doctrine of Anāśakti, his allegorism, the theory of incarnation, the description of a true and real devotee and finally the description of an ideal sage. Anāśakti yoga, according to Mahadeo Desai, is 'the Doctrine of Renunciation'. Gandhiji takes it as the Sun round which revolve the three planets of devotion, knowledge and action.²² Bhakti, Jñāna and Karma are entirely dependent on and governed by the doctrine of Anāśakti. It is regarded as a coin of which Ahimsā and Satya are the two sides. In its analysis Anāśakti demands desireless action, the dedication of all actions to God and surrendering oneself to God, body and soul, thus making this body of man,²³ the temple of God. He who renounces gains a thousand fold. Gandhi takes the Mahābhārata as allegorical rather than historical and the Bhagavad-gītā itself represents the moral duel that is perpetually going on inside us. The Pāṇḍavas are regarded as forces of light, the Kauravas as those of darkness and the Kurukshetra as the human body in which they play their part. Arjuna and Kṛiṣṇa too in allegorical sense be taken to represent 'the individual ego and the great Indweller respectively'. Gandhi's criterion for incarnation is the great

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 tively'. Gandhi's criterion for incarnation is the great

service that a man does to humanity. Being born men, people first become men-gods and then gods. Wherever there is excellence, wherever there is pre-eminence, wherever there is a portion of the great power and justice of God, it could be presumed that God is present as an incarnation (X. 41). As pointed out by Hegel,²⁴ who seems to have read the Gītā, 'it is the substantial or the universal which constitutes the essence of things, as equivalent to an incarnation.'

The Real Devotee :

As regards the qualification of a real devotee, he is jealous of none, full of mercy, without tint of egoism, treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, ever forgiving, contented, firm in resolve, and has dedicated mind and soul to God. He causes no dread, nor is he afraid of others, free from exultation, sorrow and fear, is pure in conduct and thought, versed in action, but indifferent to its fruits, good or bad. Treating friends and foes alike, he is untouched by respect or disregard ; neither puffed by praise nor is affected by people's contempt. Such a person loving silence and solitude has a disciplined mind and is reasonable.²⁵ The Yogi²⁶, in words of Mahadeo Desai, 'is one who reflects all these attributes in his life. In the midst of raging storm and blinding spray he keeps his vision of the Sun undisturbed. Looking to difficulties and death in the face, he goes with the same mind to the shambles and the scaffold. His mind is so serene that thunder rocks him to sleep.'

Gandhi had immense faith in God. This faith, according to him, serves as the healing balm for the afflicted people -

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As regards the qualification of a real devotee, he is jealous of none, full of mercy, without hint of egotism, treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, ever forgiving, contented, firm in resolve, and has dedicated mind and soul to God. He craves no bread, nor is he afraid of others, free from exultation, sorrow and fear, is pure in conduct and thought, versed in action, but indifferent to its fruits, good or bad. Treating friends and foes alike, he is untouched by respect or disregard; neither puffed by praise nor is affected by censure or contempt. Such a person loving silence and solitude has a disciplined mind and is respectable. The Yogi, in words of Maharshi Datt, is one who reflects all these attributes in his life. In the midst of raging storm and blinding spray he keeps his vision of the Sun undisturbed, looking to difficulties and death in the face, he goes with the same mind to the chambers and the scullery. His mind is so serene that thunder takes him no sleep. Gandhi had immense faith in God. This faith, according to him, serves as the healing pain for the afflicted people.

physically and spiritually. Those who turn to Him shall have no regrets, not excluding even those who may be born from the very womb of sin. But our sins will not be washed away by merely trusting Him without any striving. Only he who struggles hard against the allurements of sense objects and turn in tears to the Lord will be comforted.

The Perfect Man :

In his comment on the qualities of nature as defined in Chapter XIV of the Gita and the reference to the Perfect Man - the 'Purushottama' of the fifteenth Chapter, Gandhi suggests that there is no man who is governed exclusively by one of the three gunas - satva, rajas or tamas. We have each of us to rise to a state in which we are governed predominantly by the satva principles until at last we rise beyond the three, and are 'Perfect Man'. Gandhi as well talks of the body as the temple of God to attain freedom. This could be possible only by desireless action, by renouncing fruits of action, by dedication of all activities to God, that is by surrendering to Him, body and soul. Further no one has attained his goal without action. Even men like Janaka attained salvation through action. He who gives up action falls. He who gives up the reward rises. Again, let no one consider renunciation to mean want of fruit for the renounces. Renunciation, in fact, means absence of hankering after fruit. And one who renounces reaps a thousand fold. Further, where there is no desire for fruit, there is also no temptation for untruth or himsā. Perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of ahimsā in every shape and form.

The Perfect Man :

In this context on the qualities of nature as defined in Chapter XIV of the Gita and the reference to the Perfect Man - the Bhagwan of the Bhagwan Chapter, it is clear that there is no man who is governed exclusively by one of the three Gunas - rajas, tamas or sattva. We have seen of us in this to a state in which we are governed predominantly by the active principles until at last we rise beyond the three, and are 'Perfect Men'. It is well said of the body as the temple of God to attain freedom. This could be possible only by disinterested action, by renouncing fruits of action, by meditation of all activities to God, that is by surrendering to Him, body and soul. Further no one has attained his goal without action. Even men like saints attained salvation through action. He who gives up action fails. He who gives up the reward rises. Again, let us consider renunciation to mean want of fruit for the renouncer. Renunciation, in fact, means renouncing after fruit. For one who renounces, there is no desire for fruit. Further, where there is no desire for fruit, there is also no temptation for action or inaction. Perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect renunciation of all desires and aims.

Gandhi's Non-Violence and the Gītā :

Gandhi interpretation of the Gītā was published in 1915. He remained consistent in his views on the Gītā. In an interview to Kagawa, a Japanese visitor, at Bardoli in 1939, on the question of reconciling his philosophy of non-violence with that of Action in the Gītā, with Krishna recommending the use of violence, Gandhi points out that the message of the Gītā is to be found in the second chapter of this work where Lord Kṛṣṇa, speaks of the balanced state of mind, ~~of~~ or mental equipoise. The last nineteen verses explain how it can be achieved after killing all passions, indifferent to pleasure and pain, undisturbed by the storms that trouble mortal man. The stage is described in language of beauty that is unsurpassed. These verses show that the fight which Kṛṣṇa speaks of, is a spiritual fight between the forces of good and those of evil within. It is not a struggle of war between the two families, but the history of the spiritual struggle of man.

The Gospel of the Gītā :

The object of the Gītā appeared to Gandhi to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realization : that matchless remedy is renunciation of fruits of action. The renunciation is the central sun round which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets. But desirelessness or renunciation does not come by mere talks. It is attainable by right knowledge with devotion accompanying it and accorded the first place. Knowledge without devotion will

Journal of the History of Ideas

General information of the subject of the book is given in the introduction. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to the study of the history of the idea of the soul. The second part is devoted to the study of the history of the idea of the soul in the West. The book is written in a clear and concise style. It is a valuable contribution to the history of ideas.

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be like a misfire. Devotion required by the *Gītā* is no soft-hearted effusiveness. It is not even blind faith. It has nothing to do with externals. As pointed out earlier, the devotee is free from jealousy, is a fount of mercy free from egotism, selflessness, equipoise in happiness and misery, firm in resolutions, ever forgiving treating alike cold and heat, and has dedicated mind and soul to God. He is untouched by respect or disrespect, loves silence and solitude and has a disciplined reason. Knowledge and devotion have to stand the test of renunciation of the fruits of action. He who gives up action falls. He who gives up the reward rises. The central teaching of the *Gītā*, according to Gandhi, is to follow truth and ahimsā - non-violence.

Further, the *Gītā* is not an aphoristic work ; it is a great religious poem. The deeper one dives into it, the richer the meaning he gets. The important words will carry new and expanding meanings without deviation from the central teaching. It is not a collection of do's and don'ts. With every age the important words will carry new and expanding meanings. But its central teaching will never vary. Further, the *Gītā* has sung the praise of knowledge, but it is essentially addressed to the heart and is capable of being understood by the heart. As such, the *Gītā* is not for those who have no faith. The Lord enjoins that this treasure be not entrusted to him who is without sacrifice, without devotion, without the desire for this teaching and who denies Me. On the other hand, w those who will give this precious treasure to My devotees, will by the fact of this service, assuredly reach Me. And those who, being free

be like a mirror. Devotion itself is not a mere
 hearted experience. It is not even a feeling. It is
 nothing to do with external. It is not a matter of
 devotion is true from history. It is a matter of
 egoism, self-interest, selfishness, and desire. It is
 in resolution, ever faithful, ever true, ever
 and has devoted mind and soul to God. It is not a
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 up action falls. He who gives up the result of action, the
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 and giving - non-violence.

Devotion, the life is not an emotional state. It is a
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 devotion, without devotion, without the desire for this teach-
 ing and who desires it. On the other hand, those who will
 give this precious treasure to the devotees, will be the best
 of this service, essentially teach it, and those who, being

from malice, will with faith absorb this teaching, shall, having attained freedom, live where the people of true merit go after death.²⁷

Aurobindo and the Gītā :²⁸

The great scholar from Cambridge, Aurobindo Ghosh, who gave up his revolutionary activities for the revelation of the self and set up an 'ashrama' at Pondicherry, is equally notable for his essays on the Gītā, first published in the Journal 'Arya' between 1918 and 1920 and subsequently in a book form in two parts. According to this sage, the central interest of the Gita's philosophy and yoga is its attempt, the ideal with which it sets out, continues and ^{at} closes to reconcile and even effect a kind of unity between the inner spiritual truth in its most absolute and integral realization and outer activities of man's life. A complete practical reconciliation of the whole truth of spirit with the whole truth of life, however, raises many problems. One of these is indeed the starting point of the Gītā. It sets out with an ethical problem raised by a conflict in which on one side is placed the Dharma of the man of action, a prince and a warrior standing for a right and just cause, while on the other side a spiritualised ethics insists on Ahimsā, on non-injury and non-killing as the highest law of spiritual conduct, finally leading to a state of pure spiritual existence. The Gītā insists on the performance of the obligation enjoined by one's Dharma, and still accepts ahimsā as part of the highest spiritual, ethical ideal and recognizes the ascetic renunciation as a way of spiritual salvation. It justifies all life to the spirit as a significant

manifestation of one Divine Being and asserts the compatibility of a complete human action with a complete spiritual life in consonance with the highest self, expressive of the perfect God head, involving the union with the Infinite.

Man and his Existence :

According to Aurobindo,²⁹ the existence of man is a triple web, a thing mysteriously physical - vital, mental and spiritual without his knowing the true relations of these things, the reality of his life and his nature, the attraction of his destiny and the sphere of his perfection. Only matter and life are his actual basis, the thing from which he starts and on which he stands. For him, the material and vital law is a rule of survival, of struggle, of desire and possession, of self-assertion, and the satisfaction of the body, the life and the ego. All the intellectual reasoning in the world, all the ethical idealism and spiritual absolutism cannot abolish the reality and claim of our vital and material base. Matter and life, however, inspite of their insistence and great importance are not all that man is. There is also the mind of man which is not only vital and physical but an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, psychic, emotional and dynamic intelligence. The mind, in turn, has a vision of something more essential, more absolute than its own absolute, intimate, infinite one, and it is that which we call God, self or spirit. Thus, the mind attempts to know, touch and seize wholly to approach it or become it, to arrive at some kind of unity or lose itself in a complete identity with that mystery.

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Man and his Existence :

According to Aristotle, the existence of man is a tripartite web, a thing mysteriously physical - vital, mental and spiritual without his knowing the true relations of these things, the reality of his life and his nature, the attraction of his destiny and the sphere of his perfection. Only nature and life are his actual basis, the things from which he starts and on which he stands. For him, the material and vital law is a rule of survival, of struggle, of desire and possession, of self-assertion, and the satisfaction of the body, the life and the ego. All the intellectual reasoning in the world, all the ethical idealism and spiritual speculation cannot swallow the reality and claim of our vital and material base. Matter and life, however, despite of their insistence and great importance are not all that man is. There is also the mind of man which is not only vital and physical but an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, psychic, emotional and dynamic intelligence. The mind, in turn, has a vision of something more essential, more absolute than its own absolute, limited, infinite one, and it is that which we call God, self or spirit. Thus, the mind attempts to know, touch and seize wholly to grasp it or to become it, to arrive at some kind of unity or lose itself in a complete identity with that mystery.

The Spirit of the Self, God and the World :

The Gīta states the truth of the spirit, of the self, of God and of the world and Nature. It extends and remoulds the truth evolved by a later thought from the ancient upanisads and ventures to apply its solution to the problem of life and action. According to the Gīta, as proposed by Aurobindo, all life is indeed a manifestation of the universal power in the individual, a derivation from the self, a ray from the Divine. But actually it figures the self and the Divine, veiled in a distinguishing Māyā. The sage points out that to pursue the lower life for its own sake is to persist in a stumbling path, without caring to find the truth and complete the law of existence. The vital and material man must accept a religious and social ideal Dharma to attune to his worldly activities, training and subduing his lower personality for the higher law both of the personal and the communal life. The observance of this Dharma can raise the stature of the spirit and prepare and serve the spiritual life, but still it is not the complete and last truth of existence. The soul has to go beyond to some more absolute Dharma of man's spiritual immortal nature. This can only be done by repressing and getting rid of the ignorant formulation of the lower mental elements and the falsehood of egoistic personality, breaking out all ego-moulds into the impersonal spirit. The destiny of the soul is a divine perfection and liberation, based on the freedom of our highest self, leads to the immeasurable God head and Supreme Infinite who is beyond all Dharma.

The Battle of the Self, God and the World :

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The Supreme God and Human Beings :

Further the Supreme, the all-conscious self, the God-head, the Infinite is not solely a spiritual existence, remote and ineffable. He is here in the Universe at once hidden and expressed through man and the gods and through all beings and in all existing things. And it is necessary to find Him not only in some immutable silence but in the world and its beings, and in all self and in all Nature. In order to attain the highest union with Him, one has to charter all activities of the intelligence, the heart, the will and the life. Made God-like, God-becoming, he can enjoy the infinite breadth of a supreme spiritual consciousness that is reached through work as well as through love and knowledge. All human activities are then turned into a supreme and all-embracing divine activity. One has to muster the strength to follow the eternal message of the God in the self and in all beings. The God-knower, God-doer, God-lover then live in God, and for God and do their work joyfully for Him in the world. Their work then is divine uplifted above the restless darkness of the human mind and the false limitations of the ego. The *Gītā* declares that all can, if they will, even to the lowest and the most sinful among men, enter into the path of this yoga. And if there is a true self-surrender and an absolute non-egoistic faith in the indwelling Divinity, success is assured in this path.

The *Gītā* - a book on spiritual life :

Ranade in his analysis of the Aurobindo's interpretation of the *Gītā* notices ³⁰ six original points. In the first four, he goes entirely against the general orthodox interpretation of

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The Gita - a book on spiritual life :

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the Bhagavad-gītā so far as ethical and practical life are concerned. In the last two his interpretations are in agreement with the old orthodox view point. Gītā, according to Aurobindo, is not a Book on Ethics but on spiritual life. The ethical element in the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā, however, cannot be ignored. The sage of Pondicherry further counteracts the orthodox views about disinterested action. Aurobindo says that our actions should be undertaken for the sake of the attainment of God. This is not an unjustifiable proposition, since the supreme aim of ethical life is always the attainment of God. Further, there are no duties for a man who follows God, says Aurobindo. All social duties, according to him, are otiose - functionless. There is no social service. All actions are to be regarded as a sacrifice to Him. Our highest ideal ought to be to surrender ourselves to the Master of Existence - the great finale of human achievement. As regards the doctrine of Incarnation, while the Gītā suggests that an 'avatara' is born for the preservation of right and justice, and consists in the descent of spirit into matter, Aurobindo takes His function to be otiose, since the preservation of Right could be accomplished by other people, like kings, prophets and sages. Moreover, 'Avatara' is both Descent and Ascent, and it is an effective channel of God. It is One who exhibits in himself all the stages of the spiritual development of the race. In fact 'Avatara' is the descent of God's form before the spiritual vision of the aspirant.

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Theosophists and the Bhagavad-gītā :

Common traits between the philosophical approach of

concerned. In the last two the investigations are in agreement with the old orthodox view point. This is not a book on ethics but on spiritual life. The ethical element in the teaching of the Bhagavad-gita, however, cannot be ignored. The aim of the Bhagavad-gita is to counteract the orthodox view about dharma-dharma. Autobiography says that our actions should be undertaken for the sake of the attainment of God. This is not an individualistic proposition, since the supreme aim of ethical life is always the attainment of God. Further, there are no duties for a man who follows God, says Autobiography. All social duties, according to him, are duties - family-duties. There is no social service. All actions are to be regarded as a sacrifice to him. Our highest ideal ought to be to surrender ourselves to the Master of existence - the great truth of human existence. As regards the doctrine of incarnation, while the Bible suggests that an avatar is born for the preservation of right and justice, and consists in the descent of spirit into matter, Autobiography takes his function to be ethical, since the preservation of right could be accomplished by other means. Like kings, prophets and sages, however, Avatars in both descent and ascent, and is an effective channel of God. It is the way to exhibit in himself all the stages of the spiritual development of the race. In fact Avatars is the descent of God's form before the spiritual vision of the soul.

Autobiography and the Bhagavad-gita

the theosophists and that of the Bhagavad-gītā led the former to seek refuge in the contents of the 'Song Celestial'. In order to bring out these relations it should be necessary to shed some light on theosophy.³¹ It has characteristics relating closely to religion and remotely to philosophy. Theosophy attempts to determine man's place in the universe and to solve the riddles of life and death. Like religion, it aims at guaranteeing to its followers a more favourable destiny by showing them the way of salvation and healing. In its philosophical approach it has recourse only to the available resources provided by nature on the one hand and the human intellect on the other hand. It lays knowledge as the saviour of man. This knowledge, however, is not based on the observation of facts available to ordinary intelligent people, but that attainable by the intuition of men of a superior level with their exceptional clear sightedness. This theosophical knowledge, like that from religion and philosophy has its relevance to problems connected with man and his relations with the Infinite, as for instance, in the immortality of the soul. In distinguishing theosophical from religious and philosophical doctrines, the theosophists lay down some norms. If a doctrine is established through observation, induction and deduction, it is philosophical. It is religious if in its origin, it is based on an institution operating under the influence of feeling and imagination. The human intellect intervenes only at subsequent stages. Theosophy as well begins with affirmations having an intuitive basis and having great emotional and imaginative significance. The difference between theosophy and religion lies neither in their

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ideas nor in their methods. It is the attitude which the religious man, on the one hand, and the theosophist, on the other, assume towards the object presented. The religious minded person works under fear, reverence and adoration, while the theosophist being assertive depends upon himself, his own knowledge and action. This theosophist spirit has left its mark on Indian thinking.

Annie Besant and the Gītā :

Annie Besant who took over the command of the theosophist movement in India after Madame Blavatsky's death in 1891, adopted Hinduism as her basic religion. Her 'Four Lectures on the Bhagavad-Gītā' shed light on her approach and understanding of the text which appeared in translation in collaboration with Bhagwan Das. Mrs. Besant suggests that the three paths prescribed in the Gītā, namely knowledge, action and devotion, are really one. These tend to the realization of God. In her words, 'the dominant temperament of the votary determines his path.' For one full of emotion the best way is that of devotion, for him who is by temperament inclined to wisdom, the way of knowledge is the best. The person temperamentally inclined to action should resort to Karma-mārga - the path of action, for the path
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men take from every side is Mine. In summing up the teachings of the Bhagavad-gītā, Mrs. Besant wants people to bid goodbye for ever to all grief and sorrow, realising the Oneness in all things. With the realization of the Oneness of God, the world and humanity, grief ceases to exist and so also delusion. In the words of Mrs. Besant, 'one Lord is the object of all devotion, the subject of all wisdom, and the source of all activity. There is one Lord, one humanity, one world, one brotherhood. There is

...not in their method. It is the attitude which the religious man, on the one hand, and the theoretician, on the other, assume towards the object presented. The religious minded person works under fear, reverence and adoration, while the theoretician being assertive depends upon himself, his own knowledge and action. This theoretical attitude has left its mark on Indian thinking.

Annie Besant and the Gita

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oneness through the entire body of the Lord. From age to age, from universe to universe, where is grief and where is delusion, when we have seen the Oneness.³³

The Theosophists' concentration on virtues :

The theosophists as well meditated on virtues. The Esoteric Hall was the place for contemplation on virtues such as Fearlessness (abhayam), purity (śaucam), self-control (ātma nigraha), equanimity (samatvam), non-violence (ahimsā), vigour (śauryam), compassion (dayā), humility (amānitvam), forbearance (kṣamā) etc. The moral method of contemplation ensures purity of mind, gathering force and power and finally equipoise or equanimity. The Bhagavad-gita provides the necessary base for it, as it does for the mystical method of God-realization. According to the theosophists, 'at once pantheistic and theistic, the Bhagavad-gītā places on the same level the two methods of salvation - knowledge (jñāna) and bhakti. In Hindu thought, nothing which has once been acquired is eliminated in totality at any time in its tradition and novelty, animism and ritualism, naturalism and theosophy, scholasticism and mysticism - in short, the most contrary ideas - live together in the same minds and in the same writings.³⁴ In theory the advaita may be professed, but in fact the dvaita and even a plurality of co-eternal principles is affirmed.

Vivekanand and the Bhagavad-Gītā :³⁵

The great exponent of Hinduism in the Parliament of Religions at Chichago in July 1893, did not fail to highlight to the western world the intellectual vigour, emotional appeal and spiritual depth of the Bhagavad-gītā - the Song Celestial.

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Vedantism and the Bhagavad-gita

The great exponent of Hinduism in the Parliament of
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 to the western world the intellectual, moral, emotional and
 spiritual values of Hinduism.

The Perennial philosophy of the Gītā is but an elaboration of the sublime ethical and practical implications of Vedānta. Apart from the ethics of conduct, bhakti or devotion to God finds expression of the religious mood at its highest and best. It is the love of God with the fullness of one's heart that makes the devotee of the Gītā an embodiment of fearlessness and gentleness. There is equally reconciliation of the demand for action and the demand for thought and meditation - a kind of synthetic philosophy. As a friend, philosopher and guide of humanity, Kṛiṣṇa conveys his message of a lofty metaphysics and practical ethics for universal application and understanding. The Gītā presents the teaching of a mighty and dynamic personality, Kṛiṣṇa. According to Vivekananda, the Gītā is not meant to soothe us and put ^{us} to sleep but to wake us up from our slumber and lethargy and finally lead us to the highest goal of self-realization and self-expression. Further, the Upanishads and the Gītā speak only of strength and strength alone providing zest and vigour to face odd situations in life. The crisis before us becomes the precursor of creation. The greater is the crisis, the better becomes the creation for the person of stern self of creative affirmation and a dynamic idea evolves out of it. As such, the message of the Gītā ensures the perennial dynamism in life.

In his 'Thoughts on the Gita', Swami Vivekanand lays emphasis on a single sloka of the Gītā from Chapter II conveying its entire message, 'Yield not to manliness, O Son of Partha ! Ill doth it become then cast off this mean faint-heartedness and arise O scorcher of thine enemies (Kṛayāma mā sma gamah pārtha naitat tvayyupapadyate, ksudram hrdaya-durbalyam

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 In his 'Thoughts on the Gita', Swami Vivekananda says
 emphasis on a single slope of the Gita from Chapter II onwards
 the entire message. 'Yield not to manifest, O son of earth!
 All that it became then cast off this mean faint-gesturedness
 and arise O scorcher of thine enemies (Kṛishṇa) and arise
पार्थिव नैवेदयैः कुरुष्वैवमिदं

tyaktvōttistha parantapa. II. 3). In the words of Swami, 'if one reads this one sloka, he gets all the merits of reading the entire Gītā.³⁶ This is the tonic for every person to rise up again and again for the mind has always a tendency to sink and slumber, and prepare oneself for the battle of life.'

Each soul is potentially divine, says Swami. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature - external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religious doctrines and dogmas, or rituals or books or temples or forms³⁷ are but secondary details. The Innate Divinity of Man needs proper exposition and expression. It is a vast reservoir of power which should not be allowed to lay dormant in man. He lives the true life when he expresses the divinity within him. Ethical conduct is the expression of one's own divine nature. One is perfect when he is living the true life and expresses his true self free from egoistic feeling and selfishness. The Gītā places ethics under the guidance of metaphysics which deals with life in its totality.

Further, the Gītā lights the lamp of wisdom in the hearts of men, enabling them to solve their own problems. Lord Kṛṣṇa wants us to combine both philosophy and life. It is life that needs the guidance of philosophy. The umbra of confusion is removed by the light. This lamp of wisdom removes ignorance and delusion. The philosophy of life as imparted by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna resulting in the destruction of delusion (nasta-moha) and the gaining of memory (smṛiti labdhvā) with

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 (Moksha-marga) and the gaining of victory (Moksha-phala) is the

doubts removed and firmness attained. (sthitosmi gatā sandehah), is of universal following. It helps man to keep his mind steady and firm in the midst of preoccupations with life's ceaseless activities. Life at every stage raises problems and philosophy guides us in finding solution to these ones. There is equally the need for self-confidence to surmount all difficulties and 'we must have faith in ourselves first before having faith in God', says Vivekananda. The knowledge of the Ātman - the divinity in man, the reservoir of inexhaustible strength, which is our true nature, is the basis of all manly effort and achievement. But the ego in man is the cause of all efforts and the root of all false values. It deludes the person. Man's individuality or self-hood does not rest in the ego (ahamkāra vimudhātma karmāham ity manyate). The ego being unreal is subject to change as also the objects associated with us, but the true self of man - the Ātman - is unborn, immortal and eternal. As Reality, it never changes. 'Some look upon this Self as marvellous ; others speak about it as wonderful ; others again hear of it as a wonder. And still others, though hearing, do not understand it all' (Ġitā. II. 29). The Sāṅkhya provides a knowledge of the philosophy of the true self. Moral evolution demands considerable reduction of the ego. The Ġitā through its philosophy of Karma-yoga - a continuous process of activity - helps to translate the guidance of life from theology to philosophy (Ġitā II. 39-40). The Lord having declared the wisdom of self-realization to Arjuna (Sāṅkhya) switches over to the wisdom of yoga (practical spirituality), to enable his śiṣya to break through the bonds of action. Here the ethical

Doubts removed and the mind is of universal following. It is in the midst of these activities, that philosophy finds its true solution to these problems. There is equally the need for self-realization in the activities and the mind must have faith in itself. Having faith in God, says Vivekananda, the freedom of the mind - the divinity in man, the character of the mind, strength, which is our true nature, is the basis of all daily effort and achievement. But the ego is the cause of all effort and the root of all false values. It is the ego, the ego's individuality or selfhood that is the cause of all suffering and bondage. The ego is subject to change as also the objects associated with it, but the true self of man - the Atman - is eternal, immortal and eternal. As Reality is never changed, it is not upon this self as individuals; others come about it as momentary others again hear of it as a wonder. And still others, though hearing, do not understand it all. The ego provides a knowledge of the philosophy of the true self. Moral evolution demands considerable reduction of the ego. The ego through its philosophy of three-ness - a continuous process of activity - aims to transcend the limitations of life from the ego to philosophy (Gita II, 39-40). The Lord having declared the wisdom of self-realization to Arjuna (Gita II, 39-40) and after

discipline demands the performance of all work, whether pleasant or unpleasant as a part of one's duty ignoring the false values which the ego attaches to life and work. Further, one need not care for the fruits of one's actions. Those working with selfish motives are men of small understanding (Kripanah phala hetuvah). Karma yoga is defined in the Gita as dexterity in action (Yogah Karmasu Kausalam. II. 47). In fact, the wise, possessed of this evenness of mind, abandoning the fruits of their actions, freed for ever from the fetters of life, attains that stage which is beyond all evil (Karmajanam buddhiyuktā hi phalam tyaktvā manī-sinah, janma-bandha-vinirmuktah padam gacchanty anāmayam - II. 51). He is engaged in the welfare of mankind (sarvabhūtahite ratah). As such, the teaching of the Gītā is not sectarian and non-credal in character. It is universal and comprehensive over-riding any form of bondage and is meant for all. Finally, Swami Vivekanand asks people not to be afraid of any one, but awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached.

Vivekanand in his three lectures delivered at San Francisco ³⁸ between May 26-29, 1900 records his ideas and impressions about the Gītā as a commentary on the Upanishads - the Bible of India. The Upanishads point out that the goal of man is neither misery nor happiness but we have to be master of that art of which these are manufactured. We must be masters of the situation at its very root, as it were. Further, in his words, 'all the Upanishadic philosophy is from the brain of kings, not priests. There runs an economic struggle through every religious struggle. The seed of Buddhism is here (in) the ordinary struggle between the king and the priest. The struggle reached its culmination in the Gītā. Kṛiṣṇa here tries to reconcile the ceremony and

the philosophy of the priests and the people. He is the first man, may^{be} before Buddha to open the door of religion to every caste. In him the central idea is non-attachment. Preaching in the midst of intense activity he finds himself in the greatest calmness and in the greatest peace finds intense activity. That, according to the *Gītā* (IV. 18), is the greatest (yogi) as well as the wisest man. The two subsequent lectures provide an insight into Vivekanand's thinking and assessment of the *Gītā*. There is a conflict in Arjuna's heart between his emotionalism and his duty. Arjuna is under the control of his emotionalism. Kṛiṣṇa asks him to arise, awake, stand up and fight. You are infinite spirit, deathless, birthless, die you must. Beings are unknown to human senses before birth and after death. It is only in the interim period that they are manifest. As such, what is there to grieve about. (II. 28).

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The lesson of the *Gītā* as mentioned by Vivekanand relates to the doctrine of non-attachment, equipoise in pleasure and misery, success and failure. What is done as duty for duty's sake can scatter the bondage of karma (II. 39). 'Know Arjuna' the mind that succeeds is the mind that is concentrative. Minds engaged on numerous subjects result in the dissipation and dispersal of energies. Further, spirituality can never be attained unless all material ideas are given up. Attachment is all delusion. If the mind is deluded and pulled into a whirlpool by books and scriptures, and contradictory notions, the man is simply confused. He is therefore enjoined to see the glory of his own soul - the divinity in him to become a man of firm will (II. 57). The person when perfectly satisfied and has no more cravings, is said to have seen the glory of the self. A man is

the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Vedas. He is the first man, nay, before him, to open the door of religion to every caste. In him the central idea is non-attachment. In the midst of intense activity he finds himself in the greatest calmness and in the greatest peace. He is intense activity, according to the Upanishads (11. 10), is the greatest (yogi) as well as the wisest man. The two subsequent lectures provide an insight into Vivekananda's thinking and assessment of the Upanishads. There is a conflict in Arjuna's heart between his emotionality and his duty. Arjuna is under the control of his emotionality. Krishna asks him to arise, awake, stand up and fight. You are infinite spirit, immortal, different, the you must. Arjuna are unknown to human nature before birth and after death. It is only in the interim period that they are reborn. As such, what is there to grieve about. (11. 28).

The lesson of the Upanishads as explained by Vivekananda relates to the doctrine of non-attachment, equanimity in pleasure and misery, success and failure. What is done as duty for duty's sake can scatter the bondage of karma (11. 39). Arjuna, the mind that succumbs to the mind that is constitutive of the mind engaged on numerous subjects result in the dissipation and dispersal of energies. Further, attachment can never be attained unless all material things are given up. Attachment is all delusion. If the mind is deluded and pulled into a whirl of books and scriptures, and contradictory notions, the man is deeply confused. It is therefore enjoined to see the glory of his own soul - the divine in him to become a man of firm will (11. 32). The person who perfectly satisfied and has no more to desire, is said to have seen the glory of the self. (11. 34).

said to be illumined of his will has become firm, if his mind is not disturbed by misery, he does not desire any happiness and he is free of all attachment, of all fear, of all anger (II. 56). The ocean-like heart of the sage is not disturbed by the rivers of senses bringing sensations from nature.

In the last lecture, Vivekanand concentrates ⁴⁰ on the philosophy of action, to look after the welfare of others, and try to elevate the ignorant without disturbing their childlike faith. For Indians, according to Swamiji, religion means realization, nothing else to regain the lost selfhood. Religion is a matter of growth, not a mass of foolish words. Referring to the bondage of action, according to the Indian system, there are two existencies : matter on the one side and the self, the Ātman on the other. Nature means all external world including the body, the mind and the will. Beyond all this is the infinite life and light of the soul, the self, the Ātman - the Divinity in man. Reality in nature is spirit - the light that moves and speaks and does everything. The spirit is the cause of all our thoughts, and body-action and everything, but it is untouched by good or evil, pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and all the dualism of nature. Every one acts according to his nature. He cannot transcend it. (III. 33). He who sees in the midst of intense activity, intense calmness is wise indeed (IV. 18). Further, he, whose efforts are bereft of all desires and selfishness, has burnt all this bond of action with the fire of knowledge. He is wise (IV. 20). The wise man giving up all attachment to work, always satisfied, not hoping for gain, no doubt acts and still he is beyond action (IV. 19). Quoting the Gīṭā, the Swami enjoins us to seek our own help. If we cannot help ourselves

then there is none to help us. 'There is no other enemy but this self of mine, no other friend but myself (VI. 5). This is the last and the greatest lesson that one has to learn. The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. All weakness, all bondage is imagination. Do not weaken. There is no other way out - stand up and be strong'. No fear. No superstition. Therefore be not afraid. Awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached, is the clarion call of Vivekanand as given by Krishna to Arjuna at the battle field.

Bhagavad-Gita and the Indian Philosophers :

Among the Indian Philosopher commentators on the Bhagavad-Gita, Radhakrishnan stands foremost, the other two being S.N. Das Gupta and M. Hiriyanna. According to the late Spaldang Professor,⁴¹ the Bhagavad-Gītā is more a religious classic than a philosophical treatise. It is a popular poem which helps even those who wander in the region of the many and the variable. It serves even today as a light to all seeking illumination from the profundity of its wisdom. It does not represent any section of Hinduism, not merely Hinduism, but the whole gamut of the human spirit in its universality. It provides the basis for agreement in body and spirit for keeping together the world. As the Colophon suggests, the Bhagavad-gītā is both metaphysics and ethics, brahmavidyā and yogaśāstra, the science of reality and the art of union with reality. The Gītā is called an upanisad, deriving main inspiration from that remarkable group of scriptures. It crystallizes and concentrates on the thoughts and feelings of the contemporary times. The different elements then competing are brought together and integrated into a

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 is no other way out - stand up and be strong. Be free. Be
 superatition. Therefore be not afraid. Be free and strong
 not till the goal is reached. Is the classic call of vivekananda
 as given by Krishna to Arjuna at the battle field.

Shriyad-ji and the Indian Philosophy

Among the Indian Philosophers commentators on the Bhagavad-
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 Das Gupta and Dr. Hiriyana. According to the late Sankarand
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 and ethics, pragmatism and idealism, the science of reality
 and the art of union with reality. The Gita is called an
 unaltered, deriving main inspiration from that remarkable group
 of scriptures. It crystallizes and concentrates on the thought
 and feelings of the contemporary times. The different element
 then compelling are brought together and interwoven into a

comprehensive synthesis. These include the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the upanishadic teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhagavata theism, the dualism of the Sankhya and the yoga meditation. All the living elements of Hindu life and thought are drawn together to form an organic unity - being different lines tending towards the same goal. This goal of perfection - the attainment of truth could be by means of a knowledge of Reality (jñāna), or adoration and love (bhakti) of the Supreme Person or by the subjection of the will to the Divine purpose (karma). These are distinguished through emphasis on the theoretical, emotional and practical aspects. At the end, knowledge, love and action mingle together.

⁴²
Jñāna as the intellectual path way to perfection is different from Jñāna as spiritual wisdom. Jñāna is employed for both the goal of perfection and the way to attain it. Ascent to the higher levels of being, losing oneself to find the higher self can be achieved through jñāna or disinterested passion for knowledge which must be sought for attaining truth.

The Gīta as well accepts the metaphysical creed with certain fundamental modifications of the Sāṅkhya philosophy. This philosophy elaborates the dualism between puruṣa (self) and prakṛiti (not-self) and both are subordinated to God in the Gītā. All mental and material phenomena are explained as the outcome of the evolution of prakṛiti. It has three strands or guṇas. These appearing in different proportions produce the variety of actual existence. As forms of mental phenomena they act as goodness, passion and dullness respectively. The Self freed from all contact with prakṛiti is finally released. The puruṣa and prakṛiti are also the very nature of the Supreme

comprehensive synthesis. These include the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Shrivatsa Tantra, the Occultism of the Tantras and the Yoga philosophy. All the living elements of Hindu life and thought are drawn together to form an organic unity - being different lines tending towards the same goal. This goal of perfection - the attainment of truth - could be by means of a knowledge of Reality (Jñāna), or devotion and love (Bhakti), or the purpose person or by the subjection of the will to the divine purpose (Karma). These are distinguished through emphasis on the theoretical, emotional and practical aspects. At the end, knowledge, love and action merge together.

Thus, as the intellectual path way to perfection is different from Jñāna as spiritual wisdom, there is employed for both the goal of perfection and the way to attain it. Access to the higher levels of being, leading oneself to find the higher self can be achieved through Jñāna or disinterested passion for knowledge which must be sought for attaining truth.

The Gita as well as the other philosophical treatises with certain fundamental modifications of the Samkhya philosophy. This philosophy elaborates the dualism between purusha (self) and prakriti (not-self) and both are associated to God in the Gita. All mental and material phenomena are explained as the outcome of the evolution of prakriti. It has three strands or layers. These appearing in different proportions produce the variety of actual existence. As forms of mental phenomena they are as goodness, passion and dullness respectively. The self is freed from all contact with prakriti as finally released. The very nature of the universe

Principle - God. The preponderance of the Gunas determine the rise or fall of the soul. The recognition of the self as distinct from prakṛiti with its gunas accounts for our release from bondage. Yoga is the term used in the Gītā for jñāna, bhakti and karma. It is the suppression of the activities of the mind, the clamour of ideas and of the rabble of desires. The Bhagavad-gītā describes how the aspirant goes to a place from external distraction, chooses a comfortable seat, regulates his breathing, focuses his mind on one point and becomes harmonised (yukta) and deluded from all desire for the fruit of action. Yoga is to be practised for the sake of attaining truth, of gaining contact with Reality. Kṛiṣṇa is described as the lord of Yoga (Yogeśvara) the Supreme lord of spiritual experience.

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The next path is that of Devotion - Bhakti-Mārga. It involves relationship of trust and love to a personal God. This is the easier way open to all, the weak and the lowly. The ^Eternal One is viewed in the Bhagavad-Gītā not so much as the God of philosophical speculation as the God of grace who inspires personal trust and love, reverence and loyal self-surrender. Further, Bhakti in the Gītā is not an amor intellectual which is more reflective and contemplating. It is sustained by knowledge but is not knowledge. Bhakti is active love for the Divine who enters into the world for redeeming it. Man's effort is involved in the total surrender to the Supreme, who is the same to all beings. Further, faith (śraddhā) is the basis of bhakti. Worship purifies the heart and prepares the mind for the higher consciousness. God is the everlasting life for those groping in the dark. He is the final satisfac-

tion. When the emotional attachment to God reaches its climax, the devotee forgets himself and the individual is absorbed in the Absolute.

Further, bhakti leads to jñāna or wisdom. When the devotion glows the Lord, dwelling in the soul imparts to the devotee by His grace the light of wisdom. He feels completely merged in the Supreme. He sees God in himself and himself in God. Further, when the devotee truly surrenders himself to the Divine God becomes the ruling passion of his mind. He finds all his actions being done for the glory of the God. Bhakti in the Gītā demands complete surrender to God - to believe in Him, to love Him, to be devoted to Him and finally to enter into Him. Such a devotee finds in himself the content of the highest knowledge as well as the energy of the perfect man.

The Karma-Mārga - the Way of Action : ⁴⁴

The Gītā as well emphasises the need for action. In preparing Arjuna to fight for the righteous cause as part of his duty being a Kṣatriya, Kṛṣṇa recommends the full active life of man in the world with the inner life solely lodged in the Eternal Spirit. The Gītā points out the extreme subtlety of the problem of action. It is sheer delusion to fancy that the natural process of karma or action can be help up. Inertia is not freedom. One can obtain release from the eternal process of coming and going (āvāgaman) by knowledge and performance of enjoined duties. The binding quality of an action does not lie in its mere performance but in the motive or desire to prompt it. Renunciation means absence of desire. So long as action is based on false premise, it binds the individual soul. The

Gītā, therefore, suggests detachment from desires and not cessation from work. Our action must be the result of our nature. The emphasis of the Gītā on lokasaṃgraha, or 'world solidarity' is in conformity with its concept of universal brotherhood. Though there is nothing that remains to be done by the wise sage as by God, yet both of them act in the world for the sake of world maintenance and progress.

The goal of the Gītā is emphasis on the unity of the life of spirit. Work, knowledge and devotion are inter-related for seeking the goal and even after attaining it. We do not proceed on the same lines, but the objective is the same. Wisdom is personified as a being whose body is knowledge and whose heart is love. Yoga, which has for its phases knowledge and meditation, love and service, is the ancient road leading from darkness to light, from death to immortality. The Gītā admits that the Real is the absolute Brahman, the Supreme Īśvara from the cosmic point of view. It as well represents Brahmaloka - a world of God, not as itself the external but as the farthest limit of manifestation.

Radhakrishnan also refers to the divine birth occurring in the case of every one of us. Suddha-Sattva and Daivi-Prakriti symbolise Vāsudeva and Devakī, the parents of Kṛṣṇa. According to the Indian philosopher, when the divine birth takes place within us, the scales fall from our eyes, the bolts of the prison open. The Lord abides in the heart of every creature and when the veil of that secret sanctuary is withdrawn, we hear the Divine voice, receive the Divine light and act in the Divine power.⁴⁵ He also refers to the doctrine of pre-destina-

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 liberation from work. Our action must be the result of our
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tion. The future is already fixed by Him and all human will is absolutely powerless. Man is only an instrument in the hands of God (nimitta-mātram). As the Lord tells Arjuna, he is merely a channel through which His power might flow. As such, Arjuna has to reconcile his conception of duty with the Divine Will.

S.N.Das Gupta and the Bhagavad-Gītā :

Das Gupta in his History of Indian Philosophy ⁴⁶ has a long chapter of nearly 120 pages devoted to the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gītā. In his survey of the Gītā literature, the late Professor refers to a large number of commentaries being written on this most sacred religious work, each explaining the Gītā in its own favour. Śāṅkara, the earliest in his interpretation, seeks to lay emphasis on that right knowledge which can never be combined with Vedic duties or those prescribed by the legal texts. Once the mind becomes pure with the acquisition of the right knowledge regarding the nature of the ultimate Reality - that the passive Brahman is the all - then the performance of action ceases for him. Such actions are inconsistent with right knowledge. A brief survey of the Gītā literature with the contribution of Yāmunaācārya Rāmaṇuja, Mādhavācārya or Ānandatīrtha, finally prompts him to suggest that these commentaries are written either from the point of view of Śāṅkara's bhāṣya repeating the same ideas in their language or from the vaisnava point of view. The latter approved the performance of normal duties in all stages of life, and sometimes projected a different conception of God in relation to man.

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2. The Gita and the Bhagavad-Gita :

The Gita in his *History of Indian Philosophy* has a long chapter of nearly 120 pages devoted to the philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita. In his survey of the Gita literature, the late Professor refers to a large number of commentaries being written on this most sacred religious work, each explaining the Gita in its own favour. Shankara, the earliest in his interpretation, seeks to lay emphasis on that right knowledge which can never be combined with Vedic duties or those prescribed by the legal texts. Once the mind becomes pure with the acquisition of the right knowledge regarding the nature of the ultimate reality - that the passive Brahman is the self - then the performance of action ceases for him. Such actions are inconsistent with right knowledge. A brief survey of the Gita literature with the contribution of Yamaśāstra Śāstraśāstra, *Yamaśāstra* or *Yamaśāstra*, finally presents him to suggest that these commentaries are written either from the point of view of Shankara's *bhāva* teaching the same ideas in their language or from the *vaishnava* point of view. The latter supports the performance of normal duties in all stages of life, and sometimes projected a different conception of God in relation to man.

The subsequent discussion in his long essay is on 'Gita and Yoga', a term used in different senses in the Gītā. The real yoga culminates in the union of yogī with God - the realization of the paramātmān. In the Gītā, Sāṅkhya and Yoga are sometimes distinguished from each other as two different paths and sometimes they are identified. The word Sāṅkhya is used in the sense of the path of knowledge or of philosophic wisdom. The object of the yogin in the Gītā is not the absolute restriction of mind, but to bring it in communication with the higher self- or God. In describing the course of a yogin in the sixth chapter, he is advised to lead the austere life of a Brahmachārī, withdraw his mind from all mundane interests and think only of God, dedicating all his actions to Him and try to live in communion with Him (yukta-āsita). This idea of yoga as self-surrendering union with God and equally selfless performance of one's duties without caring for the fruits is the special feature of the Gītā. It is not traced in Buddhism. It is equally contended by Das Gupta that the suspension of all mental states, trying to be in union with Him, and self-surrender to God, was borrowed by Patāñjali, the Yoga-Sūtrakāra.⁴⁷

In his consideration of Sāṅkhya philosophy in the Gītā, it is proposed that the word Sāṅkhya in the Gītā does not mean the traditional Sāṅkhya philosophy, yet the old philosophy of prakṛiti and puruṣas form the basis of the Gītā way of thinking. Prakṛiti is called mahādbrahma (the great Brahma or the great multiplier as procreator) in the Gītā XIV. 3. The Prakṛiti here is described as being the female part which God changes with His energy for the creation of the universe. Three types of qualities are supposed to be produced from prakṛiti (guṇah prakṛiti

The subsequent discussion in his long essay is on
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sambhavaḥ - XIV. 5). These are sattva, rajas and tamas which bind the immortal self in its corporeal body. It is said in the Gīta (IX. 10) that prakṛiti produces all that is moving and all that is static through the superintendence of God. It is used in two different senses, as a primary and ultimate category and as a nature of God's being. The primary one is God's nature. As an ultimate principle from which the guṇas are produced, it is simply the hypostabilization of God's nature. At another place the body is called kṣetra (XIII. 21) which includes the entire mental plane, involving the diverse mental functions, powers, capabilities as also the undifferentiated sub-conscious elements. The term kṣetra therefore denotes the complex of body and mind but not the living principle of the self called kṣetra-jña - the knower of kṣetra or kṣetrin, the possessor of the kṣetra or the body-mind complex, which illuminates this whole kṣetra (XIII. 34).

The God in the Gīta too has two different natures - one the complex one with the five elements, aḥmākāra, buddhi etc. and the other, the collective whole of life and spirit (jīva-bhūta). There is also in this body the higher puruṣa (puruṣaḥ parāḥ), also called paramātmān - the passive perceiver, thinker, upholder, enjoyer and the great lord (XIII. 13). The puruṣa is also called Puruṣottama or God (XI. 18). Both prakṛiti and paramātmān-puruṣa are beginningless, changeless and beyond the sphere of the guṇas. He is all pervasive yet exists in each individual being untouched by its experiments of joy, sorrow and attachment. The all-pervasive nature of God and the fact that He is the essence and upholder of all things in the world is repeatedly emphasised in the Gita. God transcends all and

is simultaneously transcendent and immanent in the world. One might attain a knowledge of God in his transcendence as Brahman or cling to Him as a super-person in a personal relationship of intimacy, friendship and dependence. The Gītā admits that both these ways could lead to the attainment of our highest goal of realization. The best course for this realization is through dedication of all our actions to God, to cling to Him as our nearest and dearest, and always be in communion with Him. The Gītā as recognizes Brahman as a part of the essence of God and those fixing their mind on Brahman as their ideal could as well attain the high ideal of realising God. He is, however, easily accessible to those who always think of Him with inalienable attachment. The path of bhakti or devotion is praised in the Gītā as the best. It thus brings together different conceptions of God without feeling the necessity of reconciling the oppositions or contradictions involved in them. There is no philosophical difficulty of combining the concept of God as the unmanifested, different entity with the notion of Him as the super person who incarnates Himself on earth as a man whenever there is a disturbance of the vedic dharma.

The Gītā directs man to perform his enjoined duties as a member of the varṇāśrama social scheme. The word dharma is used in the sense of old customary order. A man should regard his enjoined duties as his dharma and should perform them without craving for the fruits. When a man performs ^kkarma - action from a sense of disinterested duty, his karma ceases to be a bondage to him. The Gītā holds that a man should attain the true wisdom, purge his mind of all its desires, but at the

same time perform his customary duties conforming to his dharma. In II. 40 the way of performing one's duties without regard to pleasure or sorrow in a detached spirit is described as a particular and specific kind of dharma (asyadharmasya). The Gītā as well deals with self-control as a mean to the attainment of peace, contentment and desirelessness. It enables him to dedicate all his activities to God. He as well follows his conventional course of duties without looking for anything in return for himself. Further, it is only by controlling the sense and the mind that all attachments and antipathies could be subdued. The chief aim of all self-control is to make a man's ^{mind} thoroughly steady for linking himself in communion with God. Self-control makes prajña - or mental inclination steady. The direct result of such type of control is the steadiness of will, and of mental inclinations or mind.

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The Gītā, according to Das Gupta, is neither a practical guide-book of moral efforts nor a philosophical treatise tracing the origin of immoral tendencies. It starts from the ordinary frailties of attachment and desires, and suggests leading a normal life of duties and responsibilities in peace and contentment, in a state of equanimity and in communion with God. It does not advocate a course of extremism in anything. It does not favour cessation of work (nivritti) but stresses on detachment from desires. Such an ideal would necessarily involve the removal of all vices and a natural elevation of mind. It condemns people engrossed in insatiable desires filled with pride, vanity and ignorance taking to wrong and impure courses of action. (XVI. 8-18). On the other hand, it exhorts principal virtues called the divine equipment (daivisampat) (XVI. 1-5). The virtue

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of sameness (samatva) seems to be the great ideal set for the man, according to the 'Song Celestial'. One to whom sense affections and physical troubles do not touch in any way, and is the same in joys and sorrows, attains immortality. (II. 15). The Gītā as well holds that 'everywhere and always actions are performed by the gunas or characteristic qualities of prakṛiti, the primal matter. It is through ignorance and false pride that one thinks himself to be the agent. (III. 27 ; XIII. 29).

Finally, Das Gupta discusses ⁵⁰ the date of the Bhagavad-Gītā which, according to him, is pre-Buddhistic. According to the late professor, it is neither an ordinary Sāṅkhya nor a Vedānta work, but represents some older system wherein the views of an earlier school of Sankhya are mixed up with Vedantic ideas, different from the Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara. It does not contain anything Buddhistic. An examination of the Gītā from the point of view of language also shows 'its archaic and un-Pāṇinian character'. 'It is not improbable', says Das Gupta, 'that the Gītā which summarised the older teachings of the Bhāgavata school was incorporated into the Mahābhārata during one of its revisions by reason of the sacredness that it had attained at the time.' ⁵¹

M. Hiriyanna :

A valuable analysis of the Bhagavad-Gītā by Hiriyanna ⁵² in his Outline of Indian Philosophy represents his views on the work and the importance attached by him to some of its aspects. This work breathes throughout a spirit of toleration which is an outstanding feature of Hindu thought. Its practical teaching touching upon metaphysical questions is quite distinct.

The central point of the teaching is activism - karmayoga signifying devotion to the discharge of social obligations without caring for the results involving personal benefit. It teaches us not to renounce action but the selfish impulses involved in it. The Bhagavad-Gītā, according to Hiriyanna, has Karmayoga as its specific message. The object of the Gītā is to discover the golden mean between the two ideals of pravritti and nivritti or of action and contemplation preserving the excellence of both. Detached action is the starting point of life's discipline. That represents the highest form of self-sacrifice to work without any personal gain and yet to exert oneself to the utmost. The word svadharma in the Gītā enjoins the performance of stipulated obligations appropriate to every station in life. The Karmayogin works without a purpose in view but for two considerations namely ātmaśuddhi or self-purification and subserving the purpose of God. (Īśvara - III. 30 ; IX. 2). Karmayoga is disinterested only so far as it turns one's mind from worldly results and sets it on the path leading to the true goal - the betterment of our spiritual nature - self-realization. The enlightened karmayogin sees oneself in all beings and all beings in oneself. (VI. 29 ; IV. 32). According to Hiriyanna, whether we look upon the Gītā as the gospel of enlightenment or of love, the gospel of action is associated with it. Further, there is nothing in outer activity which is incompatible with inner peace. The Gītā contemplates no periods when activity may be wholly renounced. When the person with a steady resolve after weaning himself from selfish activity experiences the dawn of truth, the strife is over and right conduct becomes spontaneous.

The central point of the teaching is that the highest development is to be achieved by the practice of self-discipline, without caring for the results. The highest aim is to reach a state of perfect harmony with the universe, which is not to be achieved by any external means, but by the cultivation of the inner life. The highest aim is to discover the golden mean between the two ideas of pravritti and nivritti or of action and contemplation, preserving the excellence of both. Detached action is the starting point of life's discipline. That represents the highest form of self-sacrifice to work without any personal gain and yet to exert oneself to the utmost. The word svadharma in the Gita signifies the performance of stipulated obligations appropriate to every station in life. The Karmayoga works without a purpose in view but for two considerations, namely atmanibuddhi or self-purification and preserving the purpose of God. (Gita - II. 30 ; III. 35 ; IV. 39). Karmayoga is disinterested only so far as it turns one's mind from worldly results and sets it on the path leading to the true goal - the attainment of our spiritual nature - self-realization. The enlightened Karmayogi sees oneself in all beings and all beings in oneself. (VI. 29 ; IV. 39). According to Hiranyana, whether we look upon the Gita as the gospel of enlightenment or of love, the gospel of action is associated with it. Further, there is nothing in outer activity which is incompatible with inner peace. The Gita contemplates no periods when activity may be wholly renounced. When the person with a steady resolve after freeing himself from selfish activity experiences the dawn of truth, the

It is further proposed that man cannot ignore the still small voice within when it asks us to steady the self by the self. Nothing of what we do for self-development really turns into waste. No such effort is lost, nor is there any obstacle in the way of its fruitioning. The important point about the Karma doctrine is that it inspires us both with hope and resignation at once - hope for the future and resignation towards what may occur in the present.

The late professor proposes⁵³ that though the Gītā owes much to the upanisads, it would be wrong to take them to be its only source. There is another stream of thought namely Theism of the Bhāgavata type. The theoretical teaching of the Gītā like the practical one, is a blend of these two distinct creeds. In the words of Senart, 'it is spontaneous syncretism'. Some scholars trace the influence of a third current of thought viz. the Sāṅkhya and that the Bhāgavata creed, quite early in its history, made use of it to furnish itself with an appropriate metaphysical basis. This Sāṅkhya element, however, seems to be different from the original Sāṅkhya, as for instance, the concept of uttama-puruṣa of the Gītā is unknown to the Sāṅkhya. On the other hand, the Sāṅkhya ideal of kaivalya or spiritual aloofness is missing in the Gītā. The goal of life, as represented here, is to attain Brahman, or reach the presence of God. It is, however, explained that the Sāṅkhya as appears here has been adjusted to the requirements of the Bhagavata creed.

The Indian Theistical Commentators :

R.G.Bhandarkar :⁵⁴

Among the theistical interpreters of the Bhagavad-Gītā, R.G.Bhandarkar stands foremost. He seems to be in agreement with

Garbe in trying to interpret the whole of the Bhagavad-Gītā, including even the pantheistic passages as theistic. As a religious philosophy, theism acknowledges the existence of a personal God as a supernatural being, endowed with reason and will and mysteriously influencing all the material and spiritual affairs. It takes all that happens in the world, to be the implementation of divine Providence. The upadrasta and anumantā of the Gīta - the all-seer and the all-knower - are the terms applied to Him and these have particularly theistic significance. R.G. Bhandarkar in his Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism has a number of pages devoted to the substance of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the source of the Religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā. He stands for the importance of Bhakti, called by him also as Aikāntika-Bhakti or Aikāntika-Dharma or Nārāyaṇīya Dharma, as he finds it in this 'Song Celestial'. He as well demolished the doctrine of Christian influence on the Bhagavad-Gītā as earlier proposed by Lorinser, Weber and Lassen. Interpreting the first sloka of the fourth chapter, he suggests that it was Kṛiṣṇa in a former incarnation probably as Nārāyaṇa, that he communicated the secret of 'Aikāntika-Bhakti' to the three sages Vivaśvat, Manu and Ikṣvāku. According to the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata, Nārāyaṇa conveyed the secret of spiritual life, the Aikantika-Dharma to Prajāpati and then it gradually descended to the three great representatives of Aikāntika-Bhakti, as named above. The gem of this Dharma, according to Bhandarkar, could be traced in the famous verse in the Bhagavad-Gītā - Śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyai-
kāntikasya ca - And of the eternal right - And of absolute bliss.
 God is personified and brought home to man by being declared as

his father, mother, grand father, friend, refuge etc. The performers of sacrifice have a limited time and place in heaven and they return back when their merit is exhausted, but there is no return for one devoted to Bhagavat with all his heart. (IX. 21-22). Further, the attitude to other gods is of toleration. In Chapter XII as well, Bhagavat delivers from the ocean of death those who, dedicating all their actions to Him, fix their mind on Him, meditate on Him, worship Him.⁵⁵ The continuous devotion to Bhagavat or God provides the soul's attainment of freedom from passing. A man should fix his mind upon Bhagavat alone, dedicating all his actions to Him. Bhagavat winds up the discourse by asking Arjuna to surrender himself with all his heart to God, who abides in the hearts of all things and moves them. Arjuna is further instructed to dedicate his whole mind to Bhagavat, to become his devotee to worship Him, to bow to Him, and in this way he would reach Him. This is styled the deepest secret. One should therefore act with the sole object of carrying out God's will. This leads to the realization of the highest love of God and by this means - a man is absorbed in Him.⁵⁶

Other Theistic Commentators :

The Ekanthika-Bhakti interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā⁵⁷ seems to be endorsed by Natarāja Guru as also by Lacombe of Paris. In the words of the latter, the Bhagavad-Gītā appears to us at once as a literary expression of the most ancient form of Ekānthika-Dharma and also as being the least particularised and the least sectarian. It does not intend to be a book of any determinate school but of all orthodox schools. Round the

and they return back when their work is done. It is no return for one devoted to Bhagavat. Further, the student is not to be satisfied with the attainment of knowledge. He is to be satisfied with the attainment of devotion. In Chapter XII as well, Bhagavat delivers the message of death to those who, dedicating all their actions to him, still keep their mind on him, meditate on him, worship him. The devotee must devote himself to Bhagavat on the condition that he will be free from all bondage from Bhagavat. A devotee should not be satisfied with Bhagavat alone, dedicating all his actions to him. Bhagavat wants to be associated by devotees who are to surrender himself with all his heart to him, who are in the range of all things and gives them. Bhagavat is further instructed to devote his whole mind to Bhagavat, to become his devotee to worship him, to bow to him, and in this way he would reach him. This is styled the deepest secret. One would therefore act with the sole object of carrying out his will. This leads to the realization of the highest love of God and by this means - a devotee is absorbed in him.

Other Theistic Commentators :

The Ekamshika-Shankh interpretation of the Bhagavat-gita seems to be endorsed by Ratanji Shrinani as also by Jambhikar. In the words of the latter, the Bhagavat-gita assumes its place as a literary expression of the most ancient form of Vedantic philosophy and also as being the least partitioned and the least sectarian. It does not intend to be a book of any sectarian school but of all orthodox schools. Hence the

personality of Kṛṣṇa, it sounds a recall of all traditional forces for a new life impetus and this is what explains its universal value in Hinduism. The Bhakti is only the means to approach the Lord Kṛṣṇa - the only enjoyer, the primeval Lord and the real object of all sacrificial offerings. It as well serves as purifier of action. The cue is taken by several Swamis - the spiritual interpreters of the Gītā - to project their view point. In this context, the most important commentary is from the pen of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada and it needs consideration in the present context.

Swami Prabhupāda :⁵⁸

The Bhagavad-Gītā, according to the Swami, is especially meant for the devotee of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of God head. It is meant to deliver us from the nescience of material entanglement. Our existence is eternal but somehow we are put into the position of asat or unreal. One has to make enquiry about his suffering. Every activity of the human being is said to be a failure in the absence of this enquiry, relating to his origin, his end and the utility of the present existence. With the awakening of these enquiries the man prepares himself for understanding the Bhagavad-Gītā. He must have respect for the Supreme Personality of God head. Kṛṣṇa establishes the real work of life which man forgets. The merciful God Kṛṣṇa perfects the mission of human life. The Gītā in the preliminary study of the science of God tells the position of God, the Supreme, or Kṛṣṇa or Brahman, the supreme Controller, the greatest of all. The Lord controls the universal affairs - the material nature. The Lord, the Supreme

personality of Krishna. It is a personality of all traditional
 forces for a new life impulse and this is what Krishna the
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 to approach the Lord Krishna - the only answer, the pathway
 Lord and the real object of all spiritual activities. It
 as well serves as a source of action. The core is taken up
 several themes - the spiritual importance of the Gita - to
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Swami Prabhupada :

The Bhagavad-Gita, according to the Gaudiya Vaishnava
 meant for the devotee of the Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality
 of Godhead. It is meant to deliver us from the bondage of
 material entanglement. Our existence is eternal but somehow
 we are put into the position of east or west. One has to
 make enquiry about his condition. Every activity of the human
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 Controller, the greatest of all. The Lord controls the universe
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personality of God head, is the predominator, controlling prakriti - the material nature, the living entities. It is divided into three modes - that of goodness, that of passion and the last one of ignorance. Above these modes is the eternal time. The combination of these modes and the control of eternal time produces karma or action. The Bhagavad-Gita explains the Supreme, the living entities, prakriti (nature), time and karma. The last one karma apart, all the rest forms are permanent and eternal. Further, the manifestations of prakriti are temporary but not false, occurring like clouds at certain intervals and then disappearing.

The position of God is that of Supreme Consciousness. The Lord lives in the heart of every being as the Controller giving direction to act according to His desires. The living entity, however, forgets to follow His dictates. He gets entangled in his own actions and faces frustration. The reactions of his activities remain with the person and determine his next birth. The Bhagavad-Gita teaches us that we must purify our activities in order to draw our consciousness back from the material entanglement. The purification of activity is called bhakti or devotional service. One has to eschew false ego as the doer of action which is beyond him. Freedom from material consciousness is called mukti, used in the Gītā to mean liberation from material concepts and return to pure consciousness. The aim of the Bhagavad-Gītā, according to Prabhupada, is to teach us to reach this state of pure consciousness.

The Supreme Lord - the Central Figure :

The central figure in existence is the Supreme Lord.

Personality of God head, is the material nature, Prakriti - the material nature, divided into three modes - that of goodness, that of passion and the last one of ignorance. These three modes, the gunas, are eternal time. The combination of these modes, and the creation of eternal time produces Maya or illusion. The Maya is the illusion of the Supreme, the living entities, Prakriti (material), time and space. The last one knows again, all the restrictions are temporary and eternal. Further, the restriction of Prakriti and Maya is not false, because the illusion is at certain intervals and then it reappears.

The creation of God is that of permanent consciousness. The Lord knows in the heart of every being as the Supreme giving direction to all according to his desire. The living entities, however, forget to follow his instruction. He sets them in his own motion and force creation. The restriction of his activities comes with the person and therefore his soul always. The Supreme teaches us that we must purify our activities in order to draw our consciousness back from the material entanglement. The purification of activity is called Yajna or devotional service. And he is called false ego as the source of action which is beyond him. Freedom from material consciousness is called mukti, used in the Bible to mean liberation from material concepts and return to pure consciousness. The aim of the Supreme, according to Prabhakara is to teach us to reach this state of pure consciousness.

The Supreme Lord - The Central Figure

The central figure in existence is the Supreme Lord.

The impersonal Brahman is also subordinate to the Complete person. The Supreme Personality of God head is called Sat-cit-ānanda - eternity, knowledge and bliss in full vigraha or form. The realization of the Personality of God-head, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is realization of all features mentioned earlier. In the Gītā, activities are explained as determined by the three modes of nature. Actions are performed in ignorance (tamas), in passion (rajas) and in goodness (sattva). So also all the three kinds of food. Following the instructions laid down for the performance of stipulated duties, we purify our lives, finally resulting in attaining the final goal or destination (anādivadam).

The purpose of human life is to return to the abode of the Lord - the eternal sky which is illuminated by the brahmajyoti the rays of the Supreme Lord. In the material sky even on the highest planet called 'Brahmaloka', there are miseries of material existence, birth, death, disease and old age. The material world, described as an aśvatha (pippal tree), with its roots upwards, is like a shadow without any substance. Real happiness lies only in the spiritual world. This eternal world can be reached through nirvāṇa ^{or} moha or freedom from attachment. One who is attracted by devotional service to the Lord can go to that eternal kingdom. This is possible if at the time of death one thinks of Kṛṣṇa and remembers his form and then quits the present body. He at once achieves sat-cit-ānanda-vigraha - the spiritual existence. The acts of this life are the preparation ground for the next one.

The Transcendentalists :

Reference is as well made to different kinds of transcendentalists - the Brahmavādī, the Paramātmavādī and the devotee -

The impersonal Brahman is also described as the Supreme Person. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is called satvita - eternally, knowledge and bliss in full. The realization of the personality of Godhead, the realization of all features mentioned earlier, in the nature of activities are explained as determined by the three modes of nature. Actions are performed in ignorance (ajñāna), in passion (rāga) and in goodness (loka). So also all the types of food. Following the instructions laid down for the purpose of relinquished action, we reach our goal, namely reaching in relation to the final goal or destination (parapada). The purpose of human life is to return to the world of the Lord - the eternal sky which is liberated by the spiritual sky. The rays of the Supreme Lord, in the spiritual sky, form the highest planet called Brahmaloka, the abode of spiritual existence, birth, death, disease and old age. The spiritual world, described as an eternal (eternal) world, with no change, is like a shadow without any substance. The spiritual world can be reached only in the spiritual world. This eternal world can be reached through nirvāṇa or freedom from attachment. One who is attracted by devotional service to the Lord can go to that eternal kingdom. This is possible in the state of devotion. One thinks of Kṛṣṇa and remembers His form and then quits the material body. He at once receives his spiritual body. The spiritual existence, the state of this life, is the preparation for the next one.

bhakta. In the spiritual sky or brahmajyoti, there are innumerable spiritual planets - far more than all the universes of the material world. Any transcendalist or a devotee, who at the time of death thinks of the brahmajyoti the Super soul or Śrī Kṛṣṇa, enters the spiritual sky. According to the Bhakti-vedānta Swami Prabhupāda, the Bhagavad-Gītā also describes how one should act in order to enter into the spiritual kingdom. Material nature is a display of one of the energies of the Supreme Lord. These energies are of three categories - the first is the superior or internal potency of the Lord. That energy is transcendental. Next is the marginal energy lying between the spiritual and the material. The third one is in the mode of ignorance. Material energy is also from God. At death we can either leave this material world or remain here. We are, therefore, called marginal. Further, we are accustomed to think in terms of material energy which lies between the spiritual and the material. The third energy, matter, is in the mode of ignorance. Material energy is from God. The conditioned souls have forgotten their eternal relationship with the God and are engrossed in thinking of material things. They should just transfer their thinking to the Lord by chanting his name or practicing kīrtana. The Supreme Personality or Godhead can be approached by one who is constantly thinking of Him in this way. The conclusion, according to Prabhupāda, is that the Bhagavad-Gītā is a transcendental literature that should be read carefully. If one follows the instructions, he can be freed of all fears and sufferings in this life and attain a spiritual birth in the next one. Further, a serious and reverential study of the Bhagavad-Gītā would as well immune the

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person from the reactions of his past deeds. As the Lord says in the end, 'He Himself takes the responsibility to indemnify all the reactions of sins for one who comes to Him.'

Chinamayānand and Śivānand :⁵⁹

The theistic interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā has also many other subscribers including Chinamayānand and Śivānand among the pontiffs and some others like Nataraja-Guru. The last one quotes Lacombe's views being similar to his stand point with the Gītā, recalling all traditional forces centring round the personality of Kṛṣṇa for providing a new life impetus to the universal value of Hinduism.

Swami Śivānanda :.

According to the Founder of the Divine Life Society, Rishikēśa, the Bhagavad-Gītā contains the Divine nectar - the essence of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is a book of eternity, of all ages and of all times. A close study of this vade mecum would confer bliss, peace and immortality, solace, spiritual strength, eternal satisfaction, infinite bliss and highest knowledge. Its first six chapters deal with Karmayoga, the second six treat of Bhakti-yoga, and the last six deal with Jñāna-yoga. The first six chapters represent 'Tat' pada of Tat-Tvāṁ-Asi Mahākāvya. The second chapters represent 'Tvam' pada and the last six ones 'Asi' pada. The sixth chapter deals with Rājayoga. The second chapter notices the Immortal Ātman while the fourth one deals with Prāṇayama. The Rishikēśa Swami as well brings forth the efficacy of important ślokas - verses whose constant remembrance and practice provides the desired results, as for instance, constant remembrance and practice of the teachings

of slokas 19, 20, 23 and 24 of Chapter II will confer immortality on the propitiator and will remove dehadhyasa (identification with the body). Similarly vairāgya is outcome of sloka 22 of Chapter V, 8 of Chapter XIII and 38 of Chapter XVIII ; and supreme peace is attained from sloka 71 of chapter II and 39 of Chapter IV. Spiritual abhyāsa for self-realization is possible for the following śloka of the Gītā : Chap. V - 27-28 ; Chap. VI - 11, 12, 13, 14 and 26 ; Chap. VIII - 8, 10, 12, 13 & 14 ; Chap. XVIII - 51, 52 and 53 ; and Chap. IX - 34.

The philosophy of the Gītā begins with sloka 11 of Chapter XI, while sloka 66 of Chapter XVIII is the most important one in the Gītā. It enjoins the devotee to 'abandon all duties, come unto Him alone for shelter' and he would be liberated from all sins. Give up Jīva-Bhavana and develop Aham-Brahmasmi Bhavana (XVIII. 66) (Kalyāna Kalpataru - Op.cit.).

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation : ⁶⁰

The term transcendental in its philosophical connotation is that knowledge which is beyond the limits of experience. It is above and independent of the material universe and is related to God. As such, it is pre-eminent and surpasses other forms of knowledge. It is supposed to be beyond consciousness and cognition. This term is of great importance in the philosophy of Kant (1724 - 1841), the founder of classical German idealism. According to Mahesh Yogi, the ideal pattern of life was forgotten and then restored to man several times in the long history of the world. One such occasion was when Lord Kṛṣṇa reminds man of the true values of life and living and restores that direct contact with the transcendental Being. He brought to light

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absolute Being as the basic reality of life and established it as the foundation of all thinking. This philosophy of Being, thinking and doing is the true philosophy of the integrated life, which sets a man free from the bondage of action and brings fulfilment at every level. The different fields of life are correlated in a systematic manner through the practice of transcendental meditation, and realization of Being as the basis of a good life. According to Maharshi Yogi, the teaching of right action without due emphasis on the primary necessity of realization of Being is like building a wall without foundation which sways with the wind and collapses before long. In this context, reference is made to the roles of Lord Buddha and Śāṅkara. The former taught the philosophy of action in freedom and advocated meditation in order to purify the field of thought through direct contact with Being. Śāṅkara, in turn, restored the wisdom of the Absolute and strengthened the fields of thought and action by the power of Being. He brought the message of fulfilment through direct realization of transcendental Being in the state of self-consciousness which forms the basis of all good in life. Intellectual and emotional development in the state of enlightenment, based on this pure consciousness, purified^Δ heart with overflow of waves of universal love and devotion to God. At the same time the refined mind enjoys awareness of the divine nature as separate from the world of action. The Supreme transcendental devotion to God (parabhakti) and mental awareness of the self, as separate from the field of action are considered as two aspects of the living reality of a life in complete fulfilment. Śāṅkara's teachings enjoined the ideal

it is the foundation of all thinking, feeling, thinking and doing in the human life, which sets a new level of existence and brings fulfillment at every level. The highest ideal of life are contained in a vastness which cannot be reached by the practice of transcendental meditation, and realization of being as the basis of a good life. According to Maharshi Yogi, the essence of right action without the elements of the ordinary necessity of realization of being is like building a wall without foundation which may with the time and collapse before long. In this context, reference is made to the words of Lord Krishna and Gandhi. The former taught the philosophy of action in freedom and advocated meditation in order to purify the field of thought through direct contact with being. In turn, he stressed the vision of the knowledge and strengthened the fields of thought and action by the power of being. He brought the message of fulfillment through direct realization of transcendental being in the state of self-consciousness which forms the basis of all good in life. Intellectual and emotional development in the state of enlightenment, based on this pure consciousness, enables him with overflow of waves of universal love and devotion to God. At the same time the refined mind enjoys awareness of the divine nature as separate from the world of action. The transcendental devotion to God (parabhakti) and mental freedom of the self, as separate from the field of action are considered as two aspects of the living reality of a life in complete harmony with the ideal.

state of knowledge with devotion (jñāna and bhakti). Maharshi Yogi, however, laments that in course of time the aspect of devotion gradually lost its importance, the teaching became one-sided and eventually lost its universal appeal, and came to be regarded as a philosophy of illusion (māyāvāda). The idea that devotion and knowledge are separate was the greatest blow to Śāṅkara's teaching. The idea that devotion must start from transcendental consciousness having been lost, entrance into the field of devotion was closed, though there were devotional sects on the level of emotion and feeling, far away from the actual contact between the devotee and his God. Awareness in the state of Being alone makes the whole field of devotion real. On the other hand, Life on the basis of detachment and renunciation destroys the path of realization and is a complete distortion of Indian philosophy. It has equally led the seekers of Truth continuously astray. The Spiritual Head of the Divine Life Movement laments that the entire art of life has disappeared in the clouds of ignorance. Instead of directly helping people to gain God-consciousness and act rightly on that basis, religious preachers suggest that right action is in itself a way to purification and thereby to God-consciousness. Karmayoga (attainment of union by way of action) has as its basis yoga, union, transcendental consciousness, and samādhi is an integral part of it, in fact its very beginning. It is through yoga alone that knowledge steps into practical life.

* The Bhagavad-Gita is the Light of Life, lit by God at the altar of man, to ~~see~~ save humanity from the darkness of ignorance and suffering. It is a scripture which outlives time,

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 that basis, religious measures suggest that right action is
 in itself a way to purified action and thereby to self-consciousness
 through a fatalism of union by way of action and as the
 basis yoga, union, transcendental consciousness, and spiritual
 life in its own right. In fact the very definition of yoga
 through yoga alone that knowledge about the spiritual life.
 The progressed life is the life of love, life by love and
 the aim of man, to see how humanity from the darkness of
 error and suffering. It is a struggle which only love can

says Maharshi, and can be acknowledged as indispensable to the life of any man in any age'. It is an encyclopedia of life, bringing fulfilment. It is the science of life and the art of living, glorifying its every aspect through contact with inner Being. The Gita is the scripture of Yoga, the scripture of Divine Union. Its purpose is to explain in theory and practice all that is needed to raise the consciousness of man to the highest possible level.

Vinoba Bhave and the Gītā : ⁶¹

Vinoba Bhave of the Bhoodan Movement published his talks on the Gītā in 1956. It has a Foreword by the Socialist leader, Jai Prakash Narain. The purpose of the Gītā is to destroy illusion of Arjuna. This is true of the whole of the Mahābhārata. Vyāsa said right at the beginning of the Great Epic, 'In this Epic I am lighting a lamp to dispel the dark illusion that covers the heart of humanity'. The purpose of life is to use the body for performing one's enjoined duty (svadharma) without caring for the results. This has to be done with determination and with the firm conviction that while the body is mortal, 'I am the soul force, the Spirit that never dies, that cannot be cut up and that pervades everything'. A knowledge of this truth is essential before conforming to one's svadharma. The Gītā is both Sāṅkhya and Yoga, science and art, śāstra and kālā. Yoga means the art of living, with the mind steady of man (sthitiprajñā). He is said to be the embodiment of self-control when the mind is fixed on the self (ātman) and the senses (indriyas) are controlled. Further, Action (Karma) is a means to inward purity. One's action transforms one's mind. The Karma-yogi's work is a form of prayer (japa). The

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clear mind receives the image of jñāna, true knowledge. The Karmayogi renouncing the fruits of his action proceeds evenly being radiant in body and mind. His actions are surrendered to God. The outward action is a mirror of the mind. The performance of one's duty (svadharma) and the inward attitude of mind (vikarma) are both necessary and equally complimentary to each other.

Coming to the Dhyāna-yoga - the way of meditation, Vinoba highlights three things, namely (1) the one-pointedness of mind, (2) setting bounds to one's own life to help achieve this, and (3) a state of equanimity or evenness of vision. Disciplined living and a friendly and balanced outlook are equally necessary along with a spirit of detachment and practice. Reference is as well made to pure joy with bhakti in its sublime vision. There are branches and twigs of the tree of bhakti, particularly the devotee with a motive (sakāma bhakta) and the disinterested one (niskāma bhakta) - trying to reach the Lord through action, love or knowledge.

Human life, according to Bhava, is full of the play of sanskāras - tendencies developed by repeated actions. All the efforts of life should be guided by the idea that the end should be sweet and blissful. The end of this life - janma - is the beginning of the next. One should therefore walk through life having in mind the hour of death. In fact, death is the crown of life, and our last moments should be holy, pure and sweet. With the unbroken flow of the pure stream of sanskāras through life, the death would appear as a bringer of bliss. All life can be filled with the name of God. Any action performed with the feeling (bhāvanā) that it is God's work becomes

Coming to the human body - the way of salvation.

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through life, the death would appear as a prisoner of life.

All life can be filled with the sense of God. Any action per-

formed with devotion

a sacrament. Once the shining presence of the Lord is settled in the mind, all blemishes would vanish and the darkness of evil would disappear. The vast creation is the Lord's book and because of the thick veil of ignorance one finds it closed. In this book of creation, the name of the Lord is written down everywhere in beautiful letters. Both the Saguna and Nirguna devotees are children of the same mother. In the yoga of Saguna bhakti we directly employ the indriyas - sense. All the senses are used in the service of the Lord. Nirguna is all jñāna - knowledge. According to Bhava, mere jñāna is not enough though it reduces to ashes the grosser imperfections of the heart, but not the subtler impurities which could be cleaned by the waters of bhakti. The nirguna-bhakti concentrates on the ātman itself. Saguna is no doubt easy but it needs nirguna to complete its process. They are not incompatible. Saguna lies hidden in nirguna. Both are indeed one. The qualities of the bhakta in the Twelfth Chapter of the Ġitā are like those of the sthitiprajñā in the Second Chapter.

That Thou Art Tat-tvam-asi - 'you are indeed the self' is the most valuable contribution, according to Vinoba, in the Thirteenth chapter of the Ġitā. 'I am not this body, I am the Self-Supreme, infuses new joy and confidence in man.' Attachment to the body does not provide safety but only fear. There is need for progressive realization of the Supreme Self - the jiva - the soul not as a mute witness - upadrastā to our activities but as anumantā who assents and approves our good deeds. With the dedication to the Lord the fruit of action, he becomes the enjoyer - the bhokta. Further, humility, absence of pride and ahimsā - non-injury, straightness, tolerance etc. are the means

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 will would disappear. The next question is the last book
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 in this book of creation. The theme of the last is devotion
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 but as a devotion who assists and approves our good deeds. With
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to the attainment of true knowledge - jñāna. In this context egoism and attachment are two great hurdles. One should conquer egoism first by constancy in sattva, while attachment is conquered by giving up desire for results and dedicating to the Lord even the fruit attained are sattva-guna.⁶¹

Karma, jñāna and bhakti are inseparable. Knowledge, love and constant effort are the three legs on which life stands. The three together make one great entity. Bhakti makes the path easy, but with self-knowledge there is no hope of transcending the three gunas. Egoless service is bhakti. We should fill karma with bhakti, but jñāna should be in it, and the elixir divine transforms life. In the reference to the famous mantra Oṃ tat sat - 'Om', stands for constancy, tat for detachment and sat for the sātvika nature for purity. In our endeavour, there should be constancy, detachment and purity. Only then can we surrender it to the Lord. The renunciation of fruit is the sovereign touch stone. In the final analysis we should give up rājasik and tānasik involving passion and demonic or dark features. Svadharmā, according to Vinoba, constitutes national (svadeshī), communal (svajātiya) and the dharma of all the ages (svakālīna).

Vinoba's analysis of the Gītā and its message seems tailored to suit his Bhoodan movement. According to Narain Guru, the message appears to be narrowed down and bent for the purpose of educating workers in the field of social reform and politics or both. Śāmya is the central value that Vinobha finds implied in the Gītā message but this Śāmya and sāmya-yoga are directly meant by him to promote the free gift policy of giving lands called Bhoodan. This philosophic expression belonging to yoga or dialectic yoga need not be made applicable to support localised

course in a spirit of excessive zeal.

Ranade and the Bhavan group :

The late Professor of Philosophy of the Allahabad University in a short compendium entitled 'The Bhagavad-Gītā⁶³ as a Philosophy of God-Realization' has sought to provide a clue through the labyrinth of modern interpretations. In this work Ranade notices in the third part the various interpretations of this 'Song Celestial' by modern scholars during the last century and a half. He takes into consideration the theories of Garbe, Holtzman and Otto in the context of his interpretation of theism, pantheism and holyism. Bhandarkar^{as} devotionism and Aikantika-Bhakti traced in the Gītā are considered in proper perspective. So also is noticed the theory of Christian influence proposed by three Christian scholars - Weber, Lorinser and Lassen, and equally discredited by the Poona orientalist on the basis of epigraphical, historical and philological source materials. Ranade as well records the superiority of Karma (jñānottara karma) theory of Tilak and Gandhi's doctrine of Anasakti with Ahimsā as one of its aspects along with its three component parts : desireless action, dedication and surrender. Otto's doctrine of Numenism, the supernatural divine power and Aurobindo's ascent of matter into spirit, Avatāra or incarnation as a specification of it, and the interpretation of the Gnostic ideal are as well recorded by him.

In the next Part IV, suggestions are made for the interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gītā in terms of the supreme clue of God's realization. He as well compares the antinomies of the Bhagavad-Gītā and finds these similar to those suggested in the

course in a spirit of excessive zeal
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philosophical approach of Kant, concerning God, the world and causality. Reference is made to the performance of one's duty for duty's sake with its three specifications - non-attachment (asaṅga), skill (kausāla) and sacrifice (yajña). It is equally advised in the Gītā to rise above qualities and actions so as to reach nistraigunya and naiskarmya. The Bhagavad-Gītā also makes original suggestions in respect of meditation. The description of the Viśvadarśana provides the sublime vision of God.

In dealing with the relation of the Sublime to the Divine, Ranade draws illustrations from metaphysics, science and morality to prove his point that the former leads to the latter. The last part of Ranade's analysis of the Gītā and his view point centres round the metaphysical aspect with the Numinous or the supernatural divine as a complex of the feeling of mystery, wonder, power, terror, reverence and joy. Finally Ranade suggests that the ideas of the Sublime, the Moral and the Divine are integrated in any great system of philosophy and these are ~~so~~ done in the development of the doctrine of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

K.M. Munshi :

K.M. Munshi, the founder of the Bhāratiya Vidya Bhavan, ⁶⁴ an erudite scholar, in his book 'Bhagavad-Gītā and Modern Life' tells us that the path of God has been tread by men from different sides. Those who are supposed to have reached the goal, mentioned by Munshi, are Śaṅkara, Colvin and St. Augustine. Sankara stresses the path of knowledge and once that jñāna is attained, action has no relevance. His emphasis is on knowledge and renunciation. In the words of Munshi, once again, 'by reason of this emphasis,

the human Gospel of Gītā has come to be understood as the message of knowledge and renunciation'. John Calvin was a man of action. He organised the European Reformation and laid the foundation of the broad and liberal movement represented by the Protestant Church in Europe. He made Protestantism a living force in Europe.⁶⁵ St Augustine, one of the four great founders of the Latin Church, was a man of love and devotion. A voice bade him to surrender himself to God and he did so. One finds in his 'confessions' the enthusiasm and passionate ardour to surrender himself to God which is Bhakti yoga. The study of these great characters shows that Knowledge, Action and Devotion are the inalienable aspects of the fundamental unity of human nature.⁶⁶

H. V. Diwatia :

Another book published by the Bhavan authored by H.V. Diwatia 'The Art of Life in the Bhagavad-Gītā'⁶⁷ lays stress on the social meaning of self-realisation. It is, in fact, realisation of the self in the wider context of social set-up. It demands service to society - humanity in a wider sense - as the only mode of worship. According to Diwatia, self-realisation means realisation of one's self in the wider life of our fellowmen. Service of humanity is a form of worship of God which can be practised by persons of all religions, and for rationalists such a service is the sole religion. Diwatia as well refers to the unending spiral movement in spiritual life. When evil goes on accumulating, each cycle is moving to its inevitable end and a new force (Avatāra) arises which destroys the accumulated evil and completes the cycle.

C. Rajagopalachari :

C. Rajagopalachari, the ascute politician and an erudite scholar in his small book The Bhagavad-Gītā⁶⁸ published by the Bhavan, analyses different aspects of religious and spiritual life noticed in the Gītā, such as the notion about God, Soul, Karma, Meditation etc. by putting all that was said about these and many others by the Lord, at one place and in sequence. He refers to the Laws of Nature as the Will of God (vibharty-avyayah Īsvarah). His will is manifested in the shape of what we see directly or by investigation by which we choose to call the Laws of Nature. 'God is the Law and the Law is God.' He rules through the Law as if the Law rules and not He.

The Indian scholars who have commented on the Bhagavad-Gītā with their interpretations include the activitists, the devotionalists and the intellectuals. The three paths ultimately lead to the realisation of God and depend on the dominant temperament of the person engaged in this spiritual exercise. For him who is full of emotion, the best way is that of devotion, one who is by temperament inclined to wisdom the way of knowledge is the best ; and for him who is temperamentally inclined to action, the path of karma-action is the best. The nomenclature accorded to these three different types of persons engaged in their spiritual exercise is given differently by Aldous Huxlay in his Perennial Philosophy. The cerebral type stresses the activity of the head representing the path of knowledge, the cardiac type laying stress on the heart leading to the path of devotion and the muscular one follow the path of action. These are supposed to be integrated in the term jñāna-bhakti

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karma-samuccaya, as proposed by Belvalkar. While the paths to God realisation might vary according to the temperament, background and the means available to the sādhaka - the person striving to reach this goal, there cannot be two opinions on the oneness of God, his world and humanity. The evenness of mind or temper is a sin-qua-non for all situations in life. As one Lord is the object of all devotion, the subject of all wisdom and the source of all activity, there cannot be any discrimination in the realm of His peoples - his votaries. There is one world, one brotherhood and one God. Grief and delusion, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow are all parts of life and its activities and these have to be tasted with mental equanimity.

Whatever might have been the interpretations and stress of the Indian commentators on different paths, these all lead to the same goal with the integration of these into one. The unflinching faith and devotion (bhaktir-avyabhicārinī) in the Lord by surrendering to Him one's acts and deeds based on his knowledge and strength and capacity. The extent to which these thoughts are shared by the commentators on the Bhagavad-Gītā in the West in the present century, is a matter necessitating fuller consideration and deliberation in a wider context. As is pointed out by one scholar, W.D.P.Hill in his introduction to the Bhagavad-Gītā, 'the whole world may be regarded as a puppet show in which the producer, the scenery and the spectator are all Brahman. Let us not regard the performance as absolutely unreal'. This concept is equally endorsed much earlier by Shakespeare who said, 'the world is a theatre, the earth a stage which God and Nature do with actors ^efi_ll.'

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The three paths of attaining salvation, namely work (karma), knowledge (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti), though receiving emphasis according to individual temperament have to be kept in proper relationship. There is, however, no provision for a golden mean or of balancing one against the other. Action no doubt is inevitable, but the doer requires knowledge. The role of active engagement can be successfully played by one who knows that although living in the midst of motion, the self remains untouched (XIV. 20-21). The principle of knowledge is emphasised at many places in the Gītā to pierce the fog of delusion (IV. 42). The way of devotion is highly commended in the Gītā. Through work, knowledge and devotion, it is possible to know God, the Presence immanent in the world of nature and of spirit. His loving grace could provide His vision to the votary.

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CHAPTER V

THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND WESTERN COMMENTATORS
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The twentieth century heralds a new era in the history of Gīta literature in the West. In India the Bhagavad-Gīta was fast becoming a symbol of Hindu renaissance, a widely read religious text for the intellectual class. Mrs. Annie Besant in her 'Lectures on the Gīta'¹ looked on Lord Kṛṣṇa as the ideal leader of men 'the Active' and 'Gracious one', in whom one could find half-hearted melody and elusive fleeting grace, scarce seen but sensed, as also human greatness as a politician, as a statesman and as a guide of nations. The historicity of Kṛṣṇa was accepted. At the other end, in the West it was regarded as being less relevant to the present than to the past, as a useful text for study in Sanskrit poetry and in its composition and as still something of a puzzle. The historicity of Kṛṣṇa, the impact of the Christianity, particularly the New Testament, as also the pantheistic element in the Gīta being older than the theistic belief in Viṣṇu - Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme God, earlier proposed by Adolf Holtzmann,² had become subjects of discussion and individual consideration. It was the general theory among the scholars of religion that monotheism was a later development and the ethical monotheism was the latest one in the sphere of religion. The theism of the Gīta was taken as not fully evolved and as such emerged at a relatively late stage in the composition and elaboration of the Great Epic. Holtzmann's views were, however,³ questioned by Richard Garbe of Tübingen in his work Die Bhagavad Gīta (1905). He proposed that this work had originally been composed (c. second century B.C.) on the basis of the Sāṅkhya yoga philosophy, but as a strictly theistic text in glorification of

The twentieth century has seen a new era in the history of Gita literature in the West. In India the Gita has last become a symbol of Hindu renaissance, a widely read religious text for the intellectual class. Prof. Janaki Prasad in her 'Lectures on the Gita' looked on Lord Krishna as the leader of men 'the Active' and 'passive' one, in whom one could find half-hearted melody and elusive leading grace, serene and but sensed, as also human greatness as a politician, as a statesman and as a guide of nations. The history of Gita was accepted. At the other end in the West it was regarded as being less relevant to the present than to the past, as a useful text for study in Sanskrit poetry and in the composition and as still something of a puzzle. The history of Gita, the impact of the Christianity, particularly the New Testament, as also the pantheistic element in the Gita being older than the theistic belief in Vishnu - Krishna as the Supreme God, earlier proposed by Adolf Holtzmann, had become subjects of discussion and individual consideration. It was the general theory among the scholars of religion that monotheism was a later development and the ethical monotheism was the latest one in the sphere of religion. The theism of the Gita was taken as not fully evolved and as such emerged at a relatively late stage in the composition and also-ration of the Great Epic. Holtzmann's views were, however, questioned by Richard Garbe of Tübingen in his work *Die Bhagavad Gita* (1905). He proposed that this work had originally been composed (c. second century B.C.) on the basis of the Upanishads and as a strictly theistic text in glorification of

Kriṣṇa the pantheism of the Upanishads was subsequently superimposed upon the original composition. A few years later Garbe wrote on the Bhagavad-gītā in James Hastings 'Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics'⁴ Vol. II, 1909 and summarised his findings. He traces the historical development of Kriṣṇa in the Mahābhārata, as a human hero at one time, at another as a semi-divine (a phenomenal form of Viṣṇu), or again as the only God, and also is finally identified with 'Brahman' - the All-Soul.⁵ He came to be identified with the god of the Bhāgavatas. The Bhagavad-gītā, according to Garbe, was originally a text book of this sect which in due course attained such a position that no other product of Indian religious literature is worthy to hold a place by the side of the Bhagavad-gītā, in view of the beauty and elevated character of thought and expression in many passages. There is also raised in it a structure of lofty ethical teaching which is missing in orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. The doctrines which are put into the mouth of Kriṣṇa present a remarkable combination of pantheistic and monotheistic ideas of philosophical thoughts, and of pure and deeply religious faith in God.

Kriṣṇa as the personal God manifests himself in the form of a human hero, propounds his doctrines and demands of his listener's not only the fulfilment of his enjoined duty on a Kṣatriya, above everything else, faith and love, and resignation in Him as the Supreme Self. He as well reveals himself to Arjuna in superhuman bodily form as a special grace. The Lord, thus conceived in as personal a manner as possible, dominates the entire poem. There is also introduced several times the neuter impersonal Brahman, the Absolute. Thus, at one time, Kriṣṇa says of himself as the

Krishna the pantheism of the Bhagavad-gita. A few years later, in 1900, he wrote on the Bhagavad-gita in three installments, 'The Bhagavad-gita', 'Religion and Ethics', Vol. II, 1900 and published his findings. He traces the historical development of Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita as a human hero at one time, at another as a semi-divine (phenomenal form of Vishnu), or again as the only God, and also is finally identified with Brahman - the All-Soul. He came to be identified with the God of the Bhagavad-gita. The Bhagavad-gita, according to Garbe, was originally a text book of this sect which in due course attained such a position that no other product of Indian religious literature is worthy to hold a place by the side of the Bhagavad-gita. In view of the beauty and elevated character of thought and expression in many passages, there is also raised in it a structure of lofty ethical teaching which is missing in orthodox systems of Indian philosophy. The doctrines which are put into the mouth of Krishna present a remarkable combination of pantheistic and monotheistic ideas of philosophical thoughts, and of pure and deeply religious faith in God. Krishna as the personal God manifests himself in the form of a human hero, proclaims his doctrine and demands of his listeners not only the fulfilment of his enjoined duty as a Kshatriya, above everything else, faith and love, and resignation in him as the Supreme Self. He as well reveals himself to Arjuna in superhuman bodily form as a special grace. The Lord thus conceived in a personal manner as possible, dominated the entire poem. There is also introduced several times the gentler impersonal Brahman. The Absolute. Thus, at one time, Krishna says of himself as the

one Sole Supreme God, the Creator and ruler of the universe, and at another he sets forth the Vedantic doctrine of the Brahman and of māyā, the cosmic illusion. He then proclaims that the supreme end of man is to transcend this cosmical illusion and become one with Brahman. These two doctrines, the theistic and the pantheistic, are interwoven with one another, sometimes closely and without a break and sometimes more loosely connected. The two forms of belief are throughout treated entirely as though no distinction of all exists between the two, whether as regards contents or value.

According to Garbe,⁶ the doctrines of the true Bhagavad-gīta may be defined as the faith of the Bhāgavatas, considerably modified by the introduction of elements from the Sāṅkhya yoga. He, however, does not propose to adhere to the lines of the thought of the poem, which wanders from one end to the other and in its practical aspects integrates the different reorganized standpoints of religion and philosophy. As such, he begins consideration of different aspects in a systematic manner. God is considered a conscious, eternal, and almighty Being, the 'Great Lord of the Universe', without any beginning. (X. 3). He is distinct not only from the perishable world, but also from the imperishable soul of existing beings (XV. 17-19). He is the father of all creatures while matter is compared to the great womb (mahat-brahmayoni) (XIV. 3). He superintends the rise, development and decay of the universe (IX. 78) and is described as the origin and end of the entire world (VII. 6, 8) and is also identified with death (kāla). All His acts are solely for the sake of the universe, for He Himself has no wish to fulfil and no end to attain (III. 22, 24). He recarnates

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Himself for the protection of the good and the destruction of the evil, when justice declines and injustice increases, in order to establish the right (IV. 6-8). He is not fettered by His action (IV. 13-14 ; IX. 9) and can never be entangled in worldly existence.

God in relation to mankind :

God in relation to mankind is benign and loving to those who love Him and surrender to Him. They have to be wholeheartedly devoted to Him (VII. 17)(XII. 14-20 ; XVII. 64, 65, 69) and He frees those who take refuge in Him from all sins (XVI. 19). Confidence must be reposed in the Divine grace (prasāda). While God guides the processes of the world, all acts are ascribed to matter (prakṛiti) in the Gītā (III. 27 ; V. 14 ; XIII. 20, 29). The universe is evolved out of primitive matter and it reverts back again into it. Garbe takes this conception of evolution and re-absorption like the theory of the world periods being derived from the Sāṅkhya system, and generally all the views of the Bhagavad-Gītā with regard to matter agree with the doctrine of the Sāṅkhya. So also the three guṇas - strands - play the same part as in the Sāṅkhya system.

Matter and Soul :

While the matter is subject to incessant mutation and change, and all in the products of matter are mutable, the soul is not susceptible to change. The soul dwells within the body absolutely inactive, 'neither acting, nor inspiring action' (V. 13-15) and remains unaffected by all the influences and acts of matter. This thought is elaborated in beautiful language

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with similies in the sacred Book of the Bhagavad-gītā. The Soul is the true I, which abandons the worn-out bodies and enters into new ones, like discarding the old worn-out clothes and putting on the new ones. All this is pure Sāṅkhya doctrine. Nevertheless the conception of the spiritual principles of Gītā is essentially different from that of the Sāṅkhya system. It is definitely more religious than philosophical. Individual soul does not lead a separate existence but serves as a part from the Divine Soul (XV. 7 ; XVI. 18 ; XVIII. 6). All individual souls are of Divine origin. They have entered into a union with matter which is incapable of effecting any change in the souls. Further, it is the duty of man to regulate his life in such a way that his soul returns again to its origin, namely God.

The Gītā in Practice :

Now coming to the practical part of the doctrines of the Gītā, two opposite ways of salvation are proposed, one of which relates to withdrawl from the life of the world, and seeks after knowledge ; the other stresses on the performance of duty free from desire. The second one is described as superior, (III. 8 ; V. 2 ; XVIII. 7) but the first one is not outright rejected. The concept of deliverence from the cycle of existence through meditation in complete isolation from the world, so deeply-rooted in all thoughtful circle, has not been seriously assailed. In fact, the Bhagavad-Gītā reconciles the two views by explaining that action in fulfilment of duty without caring for the fruit is equivalent to the abstinence from action following the way of life. In general, the view of the Gītā is that saving knowledge is not limited to the discrimination of soul and matter, but this discrimination is to be regarded merely as

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a condition preliminary to the Knowledge of God, opening the way to the highest salvation.

The Ethical ideal of the Gita :

As regards the second way of salvation, the mere performance of duty would not lead to the goal so long as there is any desire for expecting any fruit from it. The ethical ideal of the Gita demands performance of one's enjoined duty, according to the prescribed precepts for Him and the Divine Will (III. 22) without vexing himself with regard to transitory material results (II. 14). He should in fact leave to God the outcome of all his works ; and be immune from the law of retribution (IV. 22, 23 ; IX. 27, 28 ; XVII. 12, 17). In the Second Chapter of the Gita, entitled the Sāṅkhya Yoga, an attempt is made to decry the promises of the Veda which take account only of the material world. (II. 42-45) and offers only transitory reward (IX. 20-21). Indifference towards the prescriptions of the Vedic ritual is also taken as a preliminary condition for the attainment of salvation (II. 52-53).

Bhakti favoured in the Gita :

The determination to follow one of the two paths, however, depends on the nature of the person standing in the need of deliverance. Besides the three gunas or strands and their influences on the life style of the individual throughout his life, bhakti or firm devotion is especially favoured in the Gita. This scripture is in fact the anthem in praise of bhakti or believing and trustful love to God. It eliminates all distinctions among the votaries on grounds of caste and sex and includes even sinners (pāpayonayah) (IX. 32). The Bhagavad-Gita assures that

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love to God leads to the same goal as envisaged by the way of knowledge and by that of the selfless performance of duty. From love to God, knowledge of God arises. (XVIII. 55). As a result the believer offers his deeds to God with the results lying in Him. The *Gītā* assures deliverance to all the bhaktas the firm believers in Him, including even sinners, women, *vāisya*s and *sūdras* (IX. 30-32). There is no parameter for measuring love, except that it must involve unflinching devotion to God. A man's thought of Him in the hour of death leads him to the kingdom of God, as they call it. Special importance is accorded to this point in the *Gītā* (VIII. 5, 9, 10, 13) because a man enters into that form of existence which he thinks in the hour of death.

The Liberated Soul :

Reference is also made to the condition of the soul that has been liberated from earthly existence and has attained unto God ? Does the soul as part of the Divine Soul before its separation from it, lose its individuality on its return to the origin ? No. Deliverance is conceived as the state of blissful peace of the soul whose individual life continues in the presence of God. Its relation with matter during this state is not recorded in the *Gītā* though the *Sāṅkhya* system provides it a conscious existence without entering into relation with matter.

In the words of Garbe, 'the religious and philosophical doctrines of the original Bhagavad-*Gītā* are clear and defined. This clearness is greatly impaired by the pantheistic redaction. The form of the poem reveals that at one time the personal God (*Kṛiṣṇa*) is presented as the Supreme Lord, and at another the

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impersonal world soul (Brahman) is accorded that place. Sometimes the two are also identified. Again at one time conscious confined existence in the presence of God is put forward as the highest goal of human endeavour, and at another absorption into the world - soul.

Garbe as well takes notice⁸ of the supposed Buddhist or Christian influence on the Bhagavad-Gītā. He suggests that Buddhist influence must be regarded as very doubtful or may at best be due to very distant and indirect source, as for instance in the recommendation of the golden mean (VI. 16-17) and a reference to the occurrence of the word nirvāṇa in the preceding verse. As regards the influence of Christianity, the date of the original Bhagavad-Gītā is decisive for a negative answer. No thought is found in the Gītā which may not be satisfactorily explained from the rich store-house of ideas at disposal of the Indian people or from their characteristic mental disposition.

Grierson on the Gītā :

In a parallel article 'Bhakti-Mārga' in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,⁹ George. A. Grierson, a retired Indian Civil Servant and a great linguist, restated the Garbe theory of the origin of Indian monoththeism. According to him 'bhakti' in the sense of love directed to God was quoted by Pāṇini in the fourth century B.C. and also in contemporary Buddhist works. It is fully established as a religious technical term in the older parts of the Bhagavad-Gītā which he places in the second century B.C., and was subsequently freely used in all Sanskrit literature, both sacred and profane. Devotional faith implies not only a personal God but one God. It is essentially a mono-

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theistic attitude of the religious sense. In this long article, Grierson also outlines the 'stages' through this religion had developed down to its latest manifestation in modern Bhagavatism, otherwise bhakti. Grierson finally suggests that the principles and doctrines associated with the Bhāgavat religion (Bhakti-mārga) remained unchanged. In their main principles they are the doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gītā and of the Nārāyaṇīya. The great linguist further admits that bhakti as taught in the Bhagavad-Gītā is of indigenous Indian¹⁰ origin. Garbe has categorically denied any Christian influence on the Bhagavad-Gītā on the simple ground that there was no Christianity in India at the time of Gītā's composition. Garbe's technique of dividing up the Gītā into earlier and later stages with priestly Vedānta super imposed on an earlier level of non-priestly Sāṅkhya yoga need not be accepted, though the possibility of interpolations of the original text cannot be completely ruled out. It fell to the lot of his pupil Rudolf Otto to concentrate on 'The Original Gita'.

Faruqhar and Hill :

Two other scholars who trace theistic element in the Bhagavad-Gītā are Faruqhar and Hill. The former has noticed this fact in his work An Outline of the Religious Literature of India.¹¹ According to this Christian Sanskritist Missionary who had settled down in Calcutta for a long time, 'it is the expression of the earliest attempt made in India to rise to a theistic faith and theology. In order to reach this ideal, the Vaiṣṇava sect identify their own God Viṣṇu, on the one hand with the great Brahman - Ātman of the Upanishads, and on the other with Kṛiṣṇa, the hero of the Epic. He is declared to be

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the Absolute, the One without a second, the source of all things and all beings. He is declared to be a full incarnation of Visnu - Brahman, and is called Bhagavan, the blessed Lord. The identity of Brahman with Vishnu distinctly suggests that the Absolute is personal, walking the earth in human form. Thus, the poem seeks not only to create theism but also to bring a spiritual religion within the reach of all Vaiṣṇavas. Faruqhar as well traces the impact of Buddhism and Jainism on the Vaiṣṇava sect by offering release to all without any distinction. Further, release from transmigration (avāgaman) is made available for the layman through bhakti (devotion) and faith in the theistic God, rather than through the practice of ascetism.

The Gītā sets forth three distinct ways for obtaining release, namely Jñāna-Mārga - the path of knowledge as taught in the Upanishads and the Sāṅkhya philosophy, Karma-Mārga or the 'Way of Action' the mere performance of which brings only transient reward on earth or in heaven, but all performing action without caring for the fruit obtains release. The third Bhakti-Mārga, 'the path of devotion' is the new method of winning release which demands whole-hearted devotion to Kṛiṣṇa. It is said to be as effective as philosophical knowledge or the selfless performance of ordained duties. (IX. 6 ; XI. 16). It emancipates the soul from all bonds of the phenomenal universe.. (IX. 34 ; X. 10; XI. 54 ; XII. 2). The Gītā recognizes no animal sacrifice and the offerings to Kṛiṣṇa which it commends are purely vegetarian. (patraṁ-puṣpam - IX. 26). The poem as well maintains or does not seek to interfere in the rules of caste, the laws of the family, and the regular worship of ancestors (I. 40-44). Kṛiṣṇa in the Gītā plays the philosophical guru - teacher's role, quoting

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the Upanishads and praising the Śāṅkhya philosophy, declaring himself time and again to be the Supreme Ātman, the object of all devotion and the recipient of all sacrifices and equally displays his indescribable glory to Arjuna. (XI. 9-31).

Theism and its Theology :

Quoting Keith,¹² that the poem is a most imperfect theism in respect of its theology, he suggests that the writer seems interested in forming a new Vaiṣṇava system by the mere juxtaposition of the worship of Kṛiṣṇa and the great philosophies of the day. In this context no attempt is made to fix together incongruous elements and set up any articulated theological concept. In contrast with the Upanishads, the chief conceptors of the Śāṅkhya seem to have been chiselled and polished to smoothness and carefully fitted together in a system of metaphysical and psychological concepts, easily understandable by the common man. The external world in it is regarded as a reality, and the soul and its individuality are openly acknowledged. The atheistic Śāṅkhya conceptions (XVI. 8), according to Faruqhar, seem to fit better into a theistic theology than the monistic ones of the Upanishads. The term yoga is applied in a uniform manner to all the chapters of the Gītā in the colophon.

Integration of the three paths :

The author of the Gītā is said to have integrated the three paths and placed them besides Kṛiṣṇa, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, viewed as the Absolute. The picture of philosophic unity,¹³ according to him, is missing with theistic passages (IX. 22 ; IV. 5-7) and the pantheistic one's staring out at different places,

the Upanishads and creating the Sankhya philosophy, declaring himself time and again to be the Supreme Being, the object of all devotion and the recipient of all sacrifices and eventually displays his indescribable glory to Arjuna. (XI. 32-37)

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and equally marked is an emanation theory and several Gods. (III. 15 etc.). Further, no attempt is made to lessen the gulf yawning between the actionless Brahman of the Upanishads and 'the incarnate' God born to slay demons and to teach philosophy. (IV. 8). The Gītā is no doubt accorded its importance in the representation of the Supreme as incarnate and teaching the loftiest philosophy for the release of layman from bondage. To quote Faruqhar, 'the portrait of the incarnate One is drawn with great skill ; the situation in which the teaching is given enforces caution of the lessons taught with great vividness ; and the literary qualities of the book are worthy of the teaching it contains. The Bhagavad-Gītā is a very great work.'¹⁴

Gītā and Orthodoxy :

Further, it is proposed that the teaching of the Gītā is now 'the very cream of orthodoxy, though its character was heterodox at the time of its composition. This is evident from the scornful reference to the Vedas in the second chapter of the Gita (II. 42-45), and in several other passages elsewhere in which the opponents of Kṛiṣṇa are vehemently criticized. The poem as well bears traces of being re-written.¹⁵ Faruqhar proposes that the Gītā is an old verse Upanishad, written rather later than the Svetāśvatara, and worked up into the Gītā in the interest of Kṛiṣṇaism by a poet of the Christian era. He suggests that a comparison of the Gītā with the Saddharma Pundarīka in ideas, language and verse would probably help to solve the problems presented by both the poems. As regards the Christian influence on the Gītā, it seems that more probable that the poem¹⁶ is purely of Indian origin. In his other work Gītā and Gospel,¹⁷

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he showers praise upon the Bhagavad-Gītā. That great work, in his words, 'has been very successful in interwinning speculative thought with fervid devotion', and it might be easily regarded as the 'noblest and purest expression of modern Hinduism'. The author of the Gītā was catholic rather than critical, more inclined to piece things together than to worry over the differences between them. He was as fully in sympathy with Krishna worship as with the philosophy of the Ātman.

W. Douglas Hill :

The origin of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult is discussed at length by scholars, according to Hill,¹⁸ with a single body of evidence with inconclusive result. In his words, 'it must now be admitted that no absolutely certain solution of the problem will ever be reached unless new and convincing evidence is discovered. In the fourth century before Christ, the cult of Vāsudeva was well established. With the opening of the second century B.C., the cult spread and Vāsudeva came to be as supreme in some quarters. The doctrine of knowledge overshadowed by this new insistence on the value of devotion to a personal God and the Veda was in peril of neglect. The doctrine of Avatāra or descent arose during this period which in its formulated form made a first sudden appearance in the Fourteenth chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā (IV.5-8). Kṛiṣṇa refers to His birth as God several times in the past to save the good and to destroy the wicked when wrong prevails. Hill¹⁹ suggests that taking all the evidence into consideration, it seems probable that it was towards the beginning of the third century B.C. that the Sātvata sect began to identify Vāsudeva with Viṣṇu. At a certain stage in the development of the Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult, the Gītā was composed by some brilliant member of

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the sect with a purpose, bringing the old side by side with the new to meet the needs of the time. The old verses from the Upanishads particularly Kāṭha and Śvetāśvatara are aptly used in the Gītā, appearing to be almost more original in their later settings.

The Purpose of the Poem :

The purpose of the poem, according to Hill, was to insist on the absolute supremacy of Kṛiṣṇa, Vāsudeva, and at the same time to conciliate the enemies of the cult. It is called by him an uncompromising 'eirenicon'. The Vedas and its devas, the Vedantic theory of Brahman - Ātman, the conceptions of Puruṣa and Īśvara, Sāṅkhya knowledge and Yoga practices, are all included in the Bhagavad-Gītā. It notices the three paths of liberation - by work, by knowledge and by devotion in due proportion and equally refers to the Grace of God over all, meeting the love of man. The performance of caste duty is enjoined and religious merit is assured to all, including besides the twice born (dvijas) Sudras as well as women.

The Doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gītā :

Discussing the doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gītā, Hill²⁰ takes into consideration the Brahman of the Gītā personified in Kṛiṣṇa, who is Ātman, also called Puruṣa - corresponding to the Puruṣasūkta of the Rigveda, (X. 90) appearing as universal and all-pervading ; Kṛiṣṇa as Īśvara - the transcendental Ruler and immanent Lord, His Incarnation (avatāra) with a purpose, and finally Kṛiṣṇa - Brahman and the Universe - a puppet show with Brahman the sole producer, scenery and players, as also the sole spectator. Brahman descends as Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva to play

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The Doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gita :

Discussing the doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gita, Hill takes into consideration the Brahman of the Gita personified in Krishna, who is Atman, also called Purusa - corresponding to the Purushasukta of the Rigveda. (X. 90) appearing as universal and all-pervading : (Krishna as Isvara - the transcendental ruler and Immanent Lord, His incarnation (avatara) with a purpose, and finally Krishna - Brahman and the Universe - a single whole with Brahman the sole producer, scenery and player, as also the sole spectator. Brahman descends as Krishna-Vasudeva to the

a special part in the drama of life, and to teach his fellow-players how best they may win through the thickest of delusion to the 'calm|pliss' of perfect truth that is Himself. In the Gita, Sankhya is contrasted with yoga, the former being the theoretical reflection of those relying on knowledge alone for release, while the latter is practical effort and the systematic exercise of self-control.²¹ Discussion also centres around the Gītā doctrine of Purusa and Prakriti, the three gunas or strands as constituents of Prakriti, Māyā or the power of delusion. Man, according to the author of the Gītā, is the centre of creation and the poem is interested in him and his destiny. The Gītā lays emphasis on principles of ethics - Good and Evil, asking man to be virtuous and righteous. Sin is a defect (dosa), a sin (kalmaśa), a crooked thing (vrijina) that leads to the downfall of man. It is in short the defiance of duty. Man alone is responsible for his sin as also entitled to reward for good deeds. Transmigration of soul ensures getting another body in situations depending on the performance of his deeds with their merits and demerits carried over into his new life. The purpose of the Gītā is to teach Arjuna, like any ordinary man, that knowledge and devotion and the performance of duty without desire form the threefold path to release. If the aim of life is to escape from life, there is need for control over senses, not allowing these to dwell on objects, as attachment to those objects will arise and cause continual rebirth. The evil has to be checked at its source with the restraint of mind and senses. This control or balance of character is called Yoga.

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 Yoga.

Life - a School of progressive discipline :

Work, knowledge and devotion - Karma, jñāna and bhakti, are alternative and equally efficient methods, leading to release. Work must be done, from beginning to end, and knowledge sought, and devotion practised, the proportion of each varies according to the grade attained. Life is a school of progressing discipline and the aspirant must pass through many lives before he becomes adept and reaches Brahman. Hill refers ²² to three special stages of control as distinguished in the Gītā, with the interplay of will, reason and emotion. The first period called that of probation is characterised by right work - said to be the means, the second one that of progress to adeptship is marked by quiet contemplation and the growth of knowledge. In this stage quietude is said to be the means. (V. 3). The third and the final stage is one of 'loving release' or 'Brahmanhood' in which devotion to Kṛiṣṇa is predominant. Entry into Him is possible through 'highest devotion'. (XVIII. 54-55).

The general characteristics of the Yogin :

The general characteristics of the Yogin in the context of his role in the action (karmayoga), knowledge (jñānayoga) and devotion (bhaktiyoga) are equally highlighted. The aspirant has to enter on his course with a determination to withdraw his sense from their objects. The mind must learn to reject impressions, and equally refuse to be disturbed and excited to desire. Such discipline curbs desire and passion and leads to mental equipoise. Opposite influences - cold and heat, pleasure and pain, success and failure - called the 'pairs' in the Gītā fail to disturb his self (ātman). Such a balanced mind is called yogasamatvam. The

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aspirant isolates his self, he is independent satisfied in the self alone (atmane atmanah tustah)²³ and takes self alone as his friend as also his enemy. In this state of mind he conquers delusion and sees the single self in every living creation, with an impartial eye. With the removal of the veil of delusion he identifies that one Self with Vāsudeva- Brahman. He is one with him and one with all. Having attained that 'state of Brahman' he has passed beyond the strands (guṇāhṭitya). He is serene, steadfast and at peace, awaiting the final severance to win perpetual release.

Naiskarmya or Worklessness :

The traditional doctrine of action (karma) with its inevitable results, and as one of the three paths of release, demands abandonment of motive and not cessation of action itself.²⁴ Naiskarmya or the state of worklessness is reached only through work and not in action. Further, obligatory or inevitable works cannot be abandoned. These are enjoined for everyone according to his situation and placement in life and society. Control is skill in work (Yogah karmaṣu kauśalam). The Gītā stresses on the doctrine of right action rather than on a complete withdrawal from the world. It speaks with disdain of those who sacrificed for heavenly delights which are transitory. It is impossible for anyone to follow the path of inaction. The entire life span is full of actions ; life cannot be supported without action and even the Lord Kṛṣṇa sets the example of work by taking birth in this world to guide people on the path of action. The abandonment of motive and desire destroys that element in action which causes rebirth. This is true renunciation (sanyāsa or

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tyāga), the true control (yoga), and not the abandonment of work. As such the state of worklessness (naiskarmya) is only reached through work. The worker, however, must be full of spirit of devotion to Kṛiṣṇa as incarnate God, to whom all his works are to be offered.

The three stages in the Path of Action :

The Path of Action like that of Yoga has also its ²⁵ triple stages through which the aspirant must pass. The first involves the suppression of all selfish motive. He works with the single aim of liberation and attains first the purification of the self, bringing the lower nature under control. In the second stage, the aspirant leaves the busy life and meditates upon the self in solitude. This strict course of meditation leads to fuller knowledge. The evergrowing devotion to the Lord turns all works into an offering to Him. He reaches 'the state of Brahman' in this very life. He finds his self now realized as one with the Supreme. The original impulse is then set at rest.

The Role of Knowledge in Life :

The stress on knowledge ²⁶ (jñāna) in preference to action for obtaining release from worldly bondage seems to be the running order of the day before the appearance of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Action of every kind was considered to be a bar to liberation, preventing the aspirant to realize the oneness of the Absolute with the individual self ; namely that ātman is Brahman. The aim of the ascetic aspirant is to know and not to act. The Bhagavad-Gītā as well suggests that the man of knowledge is his very self; and knowledge has power to free from all delusion,

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to purify the worst of sinness and to burn up the binding effect of work. Knowledge equally opens the eye to see that Kṛiṣṇa is all - the self of every being, leading to peace, release and merger in Him. But knowledge does not aim at complete inaction which is not possible. Moreover, knowledge and work are not opposed to each other but only the two sides of one well-balanced mode of life. In fact, knowledge brings all work to true fulfilment. The Gita concentrates in full on the role of knowledge in life. In it the higher knowledge is associated with the lower one as viññāna with jñāna in the sense of acquisition of knowledge and its realization. Jñāna, according to Śāṅkara, is the knowledge of the self and other things acquired from the scriptures and from a teacher, while viññāna is personal experience of the things so taught. Jñāna - knowledge is primarily concerned with the self and aims at realising the oneness of the self with the Absolute. The whole content of the Gītā lies in the realm of knowledge. It is to be realized that Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva is not only the Lord, but very Brahman, born into the world of his creation to act, yet birthless and inactive, transcendent and yet immanent and dwelling in the hearts of all.

Bhakti-Yoga - the approach of love to a personal Lord :

27

Talking of the Bhakti-Yoga, it is the approach of love to a personal lord, its foundation is faith (śraddhā) which is reciprocated by the grace (praśāda) of the Lord. God is conceived of as personal, a saviour, worthy of trust and ready to be gracious. Hill refers to the Gītā's strongest claim to fame and its age-long popularity resting on the emotional worshipper being presented with a visible object of

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 claim to fame and its one long associativity resting on the em-

devotion, and taught the value of pure, disinterested love in life. The object of devotion is Kṛiṣṇa at the Kurukshetra battle field. The Gītā recognizes that no true religion should ignore emotion which, in turn, should not isolate itself from the functions of reason and will. Devotion is no doubt the essential element in a religious attitude but knowledge and work as well play their due parts. Perfect knowledge and perfect love coincide with enjoined action without desire for result. These provide entry into Kṛiṣṇa's being who is identified with Brahman. As such the best jñānin is the best bhakta. Further, duty cannot rightly be done without devotion, nor devotion rightly expressed apart from duty. Work must be offered in loving service to Kṛiṣṇa. Bhakti is declared to be the most vital among the various elements that contribute to the balanced character, and even a grain of it redeems the weakest and the most sinful aspirant, and outweighs in value the highest form of knowledge when love is absent from them. ²⁸

Liberation or Release :

Finally referring to liberation or release, it has to be viewed in the context of death being a certainty and the dead are born again, only to die again. The liberated do not return again. The state of release is thus a state of eternal freedom from birth and death, from the 'ocean of the mortal round' (mṛitūsāṃsāra sāgara). Deathlessness (amritatva) is used in the Upanishads. ²⁹ In the Gītā the term used is amritatvāya Immortality. (II. 15). The state of liberation is described as perfect peace (parāśānti), the calm of Brahman (Brahmanirvāṇa) and endless pleasure in contact with the Absolute (Brahmasam-

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sparsā atyanta sukha). In general contrast to this imperfect world, release is called the High (parā) and the more excellent (nitiśreyasa). Release is realization of oneness with the All. Liberation is to come to Brahman to 'become' or 'to be Brahman' and again to 'come to the Supreme Person' in whose high self are included all lesser personalities. This is the goal sought by the man of knowledge. According to the Gītā, the votaries of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva 'come to him' or 'enter his being', release is Kṛiṣṇa's supreme abode and the peace whose end is calm, the peace that is in me. ³⁰

Etienne Lamotte and Rudolf-Otto :

The two European scholars, one a Belgian Jesuit and the other a German theologian, have added to the maps of Gita literature with their comments and interpretations. Lamotte in his Notes sur la Bhagavad-Gītā ³¹ has made an excellent, scholarly and objective study of the Gītā in the context of its contents. He as well includes an outline of Le Milieu d'eclosion de la Bhagavad-Gītā and a discussion of its Doctrines Speculatives in connection with an extremely pertinent investigation of the terminology. Like Hill, who published his commentary a year earlier, Lamotte finds it possible to maintain the unity of the Gītā, which is questioned by Rudolf-Otto. Lamotte seems to agree with the view that the return of the soul into brahman is not yet the final stage (terme definit) or at least the exact expression of perfect deliverance. Kṛiṣṇa who has supplanted the brahman both in theodicy and in cosmology now surpasses it in eschatology too. It is union with Kṛiṣṇa, the Bhagavat, which is the ultimate and final stage of deliverance. ³²

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Rudolf Otto, a pupil of Garbe, admits in Preface to his work The Bhagavad-Gita³³ (translated by J.E. Turner), that he prefers to carry still further Richard Garbe's magnificent and thoughtful analytical survey. His work Die Bhagavad-Gītā (Leipzig 1905 and 1921) and his exposition of Bhāgavata religion, in Otto's words, will always constitute a classic in research into Indian religions, especially so far as the Gītā is concerned. The pupil agrees with his teacher in the latter's selection of interpolations, due to exponents of ancient Vedic sacrificial theology and speculation about Brahman, but differs from him in a majority of cases as he mentions in Chapter IV of his work. The present version of the Gītā, the fundamental doctrinal Text of Hindu bhakti religion, in trust, faith and love, turns to the personal God, the Redeemer from the evil of saṁsāra, as well includes doctrines selected from the expanding systems of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. It has the ancient moralistic doctrine of the three gunas or constituents of Nature, the theology of the old Vedic sacrificial cult and Vedantic speculation and soteriological teaching about the transcendent super-personal Brahman which arise from the cult. As such, the present Text is not its original version, but is based upon a primitive text.. 'The original Gita', According to Otto, the Gītā in its entirety was not dovetailed into the Epic at some late period ; rather was 'the original Gita' a genuine constituent of this EPIC WHEN IT became 'Krisnised'. The Original Text is no doctrinal Text, no doctrinal writ of Bhakti religion but rather Kṛiṣṇa's own voice and deed, referring directly to the situation in which Arjuna finds himself. He is asked to willingly undertake the special service of the Almighty' Will of the God who decides

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the fate of battle. Ranade in his analysis of Otto's views³⁴ calls it Numenism - the philosophy of creating energy regarded as guiding genius. The word was coined by Otto to signify the values which, according to him, has the divine power lying inside it. The original Gītā, according to Otto,³⁵ comprises of four points, the discourse between Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna on the immortality of the Soul, the vision of the Viśvarūpa of Kṛiṣṇa, the unfolding of the doctrine of pre-determination by Kṛiṣṇa to Arjuna showing him a panorama of the future and the way in which God's Will works and finally an appeal by Kṛiṣṇa to Arjuna to ignore all dharmas and regard Divine Will alone as his imperative duty. Thus, the only duty is to reconcile oneself to the Divine Will and Power.

God - Combination of a Personal God and the Whole World :

According to Otto,³⁶ the God (Īśvara) of the Bhagavad-Gītā is a peculiar combination of a personal God and the whole world. He is transcendent God - above and independent of the material existence, pre-eminent surpassing others of the same kind. He is super-powerful and we have only to reconcile ourselves to His Will. This devotion is called by this German theologian as Advaita-Bhakti. It is a combination of two feelings, one of dependency on God and the other of equality with His greatness. The two make the phenomenon of Advaita-Bhakti. In the experience of this Advaita-Bhakti a devotee becomes so merged in God that he becomes one with Him.

Further, Otto suggests that the God of the Bhagavad-Gītā³⁷ is the God of Pre-destination who has already determined the shape of things to come prior to all human will and work. As

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such, man is only an instrument to conform to the Will of God. Circumstances compel him to follow that Will. In Otto's words, as translated by Turner, 'It is not the work of man, this cruel, horrible fight. It is the work and Will of God Himself. This is the meaning of the magnificent theophany and this is the aesthetic purpose of the Gīta in general and of the XI discourse in particular. The God of the Bhagavad-Gītā is the God of absolute pre-destination. (XI. 32-33). Man is nothing else than a transitory phase of His activity which man's ahankāra resists. Finally, man is merely an instrument in the hands of God, a channel for the flow of His power. As such, Arjuna as a man has to reconcile his conception of duty with Divine Will. It dictates and man has to obey. Rudolf Otto, the theologian scholar, a philosopher and a Sanskritist, praises the author of the Bhagavad-Gītā for having written one of the most beautiful of the verse in the whole of the spiritual literature. In the words of Otto, 'the highest verse (charama śloka) of the Gītā is that which enjoins Arjuna to 'Give up thy sorrow', fight in the knowledge that thou hast not the power to carry out thy human work, but my work, as my instrument. Thou art nothing but an instrument, that is an instrument for the most frightful and at the same time sublime majesty of God Himself.'

The Original Gītā :

The Original Gītā is described as an attempt to account for the composite character of the Gītā and to establish its original form by recourse to the methods of critical political scholarship, linguistic and textual, while his teacher Garbe made an attempt to distinguish between the different 'layers'

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in the text of the *Gītā* - the older *Sāṅkhya* and the newer *Vedānta*. Otto is said to have thrown all caution to the winds. The original *Gītā* had subsequent additions of eight separate and distinct treatises and a very large number of interpolations. Otto's 'patch work guilt' view of the *Gītā* has been criticised by many writers like Edgerton & others. The former calls Otto's effort the reductio ad absurdum of the Garbe school. He as well censors him for so many distortions, suppressions of the true, and suggestions of the false, which abound in his pages.³⁸ Paul Hubert in his 'Histoire de la Bhagavad-Gītā' contended himself with a brief resume of Otto's arguments taking the view that any study which prompted others to examine the text more closely was to be welcomed.³⁹ The Indian orientalists were no doubt critical since they believed that 'the *Gītā* is and always has been a divinely inspired unity, and that any attempt to prove otherwise is ill-informed, malicious or both'. The *Gītā* represents in the best and the most beautiful manner the spirit of India, the spirit of synthesis and reconciliation.⁴⁰ The 'fundamental unity' of the *Gītā*, according to Sharpe, has now really been in question and even Otto says nothing about its later function in the Hindu life of devotion. He thinks that at least on one point, Otto was surely correct that the *Gītā* was less likely to have been an original Upanishad than a fragment of most magnificent epic narrative.⁴¹

Franklin Edgerton :

This great American Sanskritist, Professor at the Yale University, brought out the text and ^{anno} Annotated Translation of 'India's Holy Bible' as he calls the Bhagavad-*Gītā* in 1944.⁴² He gave that name in 1925, a good one in his words, for 'it has permeated the collective religious consciousness of the people

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from one end of India to the other'. It has been a prime source of inspiration for many of the political and intellectual Indian leaders, typified by Mahatma Gandhi. In the West too, some philosophical and religious groups regard the Gita as highly as the Hindus do. A widening circle of intelligent westerners, losing their occidental insularity have come to realize that India, like some other eastern countries (China, for instance) has created great works of civilization, of arts and letters, and thought, in practically every field of human culture. 'Civilization', according to Edgerton, 'does not stop at Suez ; there is a great Indian literature - art, philosophy, music and so on'. It is not hard to get directly acquainted with some of the most accessible products of Indian literature and art, providing an enjoyable and profitable experience. The Bhagavad-Gita satisfies the requirements better than any other Sanskrit text to the average Sanskrit student interested in his acquaintance of one of the great religious books of the world. The simple grandeur and the human dignity of the best parts of the Gita should make it comprehensible to any one interested in this Hindu Bible, providing an introduction to Hindu religion and also serving as an aid to fluency in the Sanskrit language.

The Paradoxical character of the Gita :

Edgerton as well notices the paradoxical character of
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cannot be ruled out. The Yale Professor, however, poses to be objective in his treatment without claiming any finality in his interpretation. Even after years of most earnest effort his assessment and interpretation continue to far from being decisive. A few things here and there might commend themselves to posterity in the direction of the ultimate goal of finality.

Modern Commentators on the Gita - Its Unity :

In his notes on the Bibliography⁴⁴ and Exegesis of the Gita, Edgerton refers to six translators - three in English of Telang, Barnett and Hill, twoⁱⁿ German of Garbe and Deussen, and the French one of Emile Senart, among the modern commentators, and the two classical ones of Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja. He refers to Garbe's analysis and interpretation of the text to be profoundly different from his own, while, according to Garbe, the Gita text is a composite work. He believed that the original Kernel was a Sāṅkhya treatise (using the term Sāṅkhya as denoting a dualistic philosophical system) which was later worked over and expanded by an adherent of the (later) Vedānta philosophy. Garbe's theory is now generally abandoned. Edgerton refers to Rudolf-Otto's work as dissection of the Gita to a far great extreme end and⁴⁵ he considers the German theologian's work as 'negligible'.

The American professor's interpretation tacitly assumes in his words 'the Unity of the Gita', with no definite reason for any other assumption. It is certain that for many centuries, the Gita has been handed down as a unit, in its existing form. The Kashmir Recension of the Bhagavad-Gita (Stuttgarb 1930) showing variant readings appears to be late and secondary. The differences are relatively very slight, and rarely affect the essential mean-

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ing of even single stanzas, and never of the work as a whole. Further, in particular, the fact that a given verse or passage is logically inconsistent with the other passages in the Gītā, constitutes in Edgerton's opinion, no reason to suspecting its original nature.

Edgerton's analysis and treatment of the Gītā :

The second volume of this classical annotated commentary on the Gītā has several preliminary chapters covering Introduction, the Origin of Hindu Speculation, the Upanisads and the Fundamental Doctrines of Later Hindu Thought, Pre-History of the God of the Bhagavad-Gītā. This part of this volume deals with the Teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā in the context of Soul and Body, the Nature of God, Action and Rebirth, the way of Knowledge and the way of Disciplined Activity, the way of Devotion to God, Attitude towards Hindu Orthodoxy and other Religious Beliefs, and Practical Morality. The Third Part has the summary and conclusions. The long essay in over 90 pages is a very good analysis of the Bhagavad-Gītā in its different facets.

The Gītā in its own words :

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According to Edgerton, the best way of drawing any conclusion from the Bhagavad Gītā is to let it tell its own story in the main. The Gītā constantly juxtaposes unrelated matters and widely separates passages dealing with the same subject. Logical arrangement is not intended in the book itself, and to present the book's doctrines in logical arrangement is to violate its spirit. The Gītā, in fact, marks no attempt to logical or systematic study in its philosophy. It is described as frankly mystical and emotional, and its inconsistencies are not due to

Chapter's analysis and treatment of the life :

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slovenliness in reasoning, nor do they express a balanced reserve of judgement. Its point of view is unrelated to logic and ever opposite views are bracketed together with valid assertions of both. What it calls knowledge is really intuitional perception, not necessarily based on rational analysis. While knowledge is not the *Gītā*'s favourite 'way of attaining of salvation' and reason is an uncertain and flickering light, the truly 'wise' man should abandon it wholly and follow 'the kindly light, the lux benign of God's grace.' He must sink his personality in ecstatic devotion to God, trusting absolutely in Him, and throwing upon Him all responsibilities, and doing all deeds as 'acts of worship' to God. The conception of the final goal in the *Gītā* is complete union with God, a state of lofty and indescribable bliss and peace. Further, the *Gītā* values the emotional and the concrete above the rational and the abstract, for making the salvation easy for the common man.

Zachner and his Approach :

Ralph. C. Zachner, a successor to Radhakrishnan, as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Philosophy, had earlier published the translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā in the Everyman's Library Series (1960).⁴⁷ He brought out a comprehensive work, including besides a good Introduction, English translation, followed by the Transliterated Text, Translation of each verse with a fuller commentary. The Appendix contains different aspects of religion and philosophy dealt in the *Gītā*. These relate to the Individual Self, Material Nature, Liberation, Spiritual Freedom, Brahman, God, Life after Death, Traditional Religion, Worship of other Gods, Faith and Person, with proper references and English translation once again. Mentioning in brief the *Gītā* publications

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of his time, he considers W.H.Hill's translation a very much more readable than Edgerton's which is 'so literal as sometimes to be barely comprehensible, but his notes are fuller'. Zaehner⁴⁸ as well refers to an excellent, scholarly and lucidly objective study in French by Etienne Lamotte who 'has indeed anticipated much that he has to say in this book'. These authors, unlike most commentators on the *Gītā*, were primarily interested in the actual content of the text, not in what they thought that content ought to be. In this they seem to have been reacting against the prevalent Indian tradition (both ancient and modern) in which the individual commentator seeks to impose his own views or to the text. The best known modern translation of this sort is that of Radhakrishnan. The late Spalding Professor⁴⁹ as well refers to the practice of emphasising the various strands, namely *Sāṅkhya*, *Vedānta* or *Bhakti* that constitute the *Gītā*, thereby stressing the apparent incoherence. The Zaehner's attempt, therefore, is to tackle the *Gītā* by putting as little as possible of oneself into it to consider it as a whole that should be explained by itself and by the milieu art which it grows, to interpret from the parallel passages within itself, and from similar passages to be found in the Upanishad which the author of the *Gītā* certainly knew. The *Gītā* is considered as a far more unitary work than most modern scholars have been prepared to concede. It was this realization which impelled the author to write his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The text of the *Gītā*, according to the author, demonstrates that love of a personal God, far from being only a convenient preparation for the grand experience of spiritual liberation (the *mokṣa* or *mukti* of the Upanishads and the *Vimukti* of the Buddhists).

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He quotes Lamotte that 'contrary to what one might suppose the return of the soul into brahman is not yet the final stage (terme definity) or at least the exact expression of perfect deliverance . Kṛiṣṇa who supplants the Brahman both in theodicy and in cosmology now surpasses in eschatology too, it is Union with Kṛiṣṇa, the Bhagavata, which is the ultimate and final stage of deliverance.'

The Treatment:

^{ach}Zeuner at first provides an accurate and a readable translation of the Gītā without notes which are later on provided separately along with the Sanskrit translation. The bulk of the commentary is rather drawn from the Gītā itself, from the Upanishads and other relative texts etc, in order to illuminate one part of the Gita by another. As such, he tries to show a coherence within the general tone of Hindu thinking that was missing before. The relevant quotation is as well inserted along with the point of special importance for a better understanding of the Gītā. The Appendix has the main points of the Gītā brought to-gether. According to the late Professor, 'one would probably not be going far wrong if one dates it sometime between the fifth⁵⁰ and second centuries B.C. From the contents of the Gītā itself it is clear that both the principal teachings of the Upanishads and of early Buddhism were familiar as was the dualistic teaching commonly called Sāṅkhya, later on receiving its definite form in the Sāṅkhya-Kārikā of Īśvara Kṛiṣṇa. Of the native commentaries on the Gītā, it is Rāmānuja who, in the words of the late Professor, comes nearest to the mind of the author of the Gītā, with his

He quotes Lantieri that 'contrary to what one might suppose the return of the soul into human is not yet the final stage (terre humaine) or at least the exact expression of perfect deliverance. Krishna who supplants the human both in theodicy and in cosmology now surpasses in eschatology too, it is Union with Krishna, the Bhagavata, which is the ultimate and final stage of deliverance.'

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philosophy called Viśistādvaita translated as 'qualified monism'. He is concerned in establishing the absolute supremacy of the personal God (Kṛiṣṇa) not only over the phenomenal world but also over the impersonal Absolute, Brahman. The Lord - God - is the 'Soul' or 'Self' of the world of changeless eternal being, just as the embodied 'Self' is the 'Soul' of each human individual. God is the eternal centre of both the active universe of matter and the totality of immortal and timeless 'spirits' or 'selves'. He is the 'divine Person' who is beyond the beyond. ⁵¹ Z^{ach}ener agrees with the interpretation of Rāmānuja that 'in the imperishable, infinite region of Brahman, two things - Wisdom and Unwisdom - are hidden and established. Perishable is unwisdom, but wisdom is immortal. Who over wisdom and unwisdom rules, He is Another'. (Śvetāsvara Upaniṣhad 5.1).

Teachings of the Gītā in detail :

The Teachings of the Gītā are considered in detail in the context of the Human being and the Individual self, Material Nature, the bondage of the Spirit, Heaven and Hell, Liberation, Spiritual Freedom and how to win it, The Perfect Man, Brahman and God. The embodied self is immortal, a immute part of God Himself (15.7), primeral in nature (2.20). Salvation consists in the final disassociation of the eternal nomad from the Ultimate material personality to which it is bound. It is in fact the unlinking of the link with suffering and pain (6.23). ⁵² Z^{ach}ener takes this phrase having a Buddhistic ring. All traces of being an ego, that of possession must be ruthlessly swept away if the true self is to return to its spiritual home -

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Nirvāṇa which is Brahman too (2.72). The 'Self-in-itself' is a 'minute part' of God. It can only be realized in its timeless immortality by intense concentration, by a process of integration (yoga) and by complete detachment from the outside world. The 'self' is the centre of the whole personality, its principle of unity. Peace is achieved by the fusion of all the faculties of the human personality into the timeless self - the culmination of the process of yoga. In it one reaches Brahman, experiences a quiet indescribable freedom of the spirit in which there is no more time or space, no causation, and no action.

The God, Matter and Spirit :

Matter (Prakṛiti) and Spirit (Puruṣa), though independent in the Sāṅkhya system, are not so according to the Gītā. God is the source of both. 'Spirits' or 'selves' are said to be minute parts of Him (15.7). Matter or Material Nature (Prakṛiti) is equally dependent on Him. Nature has no beginning and no end. It combines with 'selves' to form the world, and in this combination Nature alone does work and acts (13.29). Its action is cyclic. When at rest it is called the 'unmanifest'. When it moves from 'unmanifest' into a manifest state of being, it differentiates itself into five gross elements, the senses and their objects, mind, soul (buddhi) and ego. (7.4 ; 13. 15-16). In the Gītā, Nature is not independent, it belongs to Kṛiṣṇa, the personal God. Nature is the female principle and Kṛiṣṇa the male. As said in the Gītā, Great Brahman (i.e. Nature) is to Me a womb, in it I plant the seed, from this the origin of all contingent beings is derived (14. 3-4). Man is not really a free agent. All creatures follow Nature ; it is inherent

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Nature that initiates the action (5. 14). That person is deluded who thinks himself to be the doer (3.27). It is Nature which compels one to do (3.5 ; 18.60). The constituents of Nature - called the strands sattva, rajas and tamas - goodness or 'purity', 'passion' or 'energy' and 'darkness' are the source of all activity (3. 27-28). God has set the wheel of phenomenal existence in motion. Man has to imitate God and do his duty in a totally detached spirit (3.25) without caring for the result. He has to maintain his equanimity of mind. As the Lord says, 'in success and failure be the same and then get busy with your work'. Yoga means 'sameness and indifference'. (2. 48). The truly perfected person resembles God both in his unutterable tranquillity and in his spontaneous activity.⁵³ By dedicating one's enjoined work to Him, a man attains perfection and success (18. 48). Karma (work - action) is constantly distinguished from Jñāna - wisdom, knowledge, the intuitive apprehension of Ultimate Reality beyond space and time. Work is regarded as essentially a sacrifice of the human will with the sole purpose of rescuing him from bondage. Wisdom in fact is said to reduce all works to ashes (4. 37). Works are only on loan from God to whom they really belong.

Yoga and Psychic Faculties :

The human psychic consists of soul, mind, ego and the fine sense. All these are evolutes from material Nature, they are not the self. Yoga or 'integration', according to Zeuner,⁵⁴ means bringing all the faculties of the psychic under the control of the self. Buddhi is the highest faculty in man's Nature. It corresponds to the western concept of 'soul', since it is not

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only intellect but also 'Will'. Its function is to integrate the whole personality into the immortal self. Further, the soul whether integrated or not, represents the whole personality and it is the subject that transmigrates (6. 43). Of all the faculties it is the only one that is capable of grasping and apprehending the self in its timeless glory. Its true function is to spiritualize matter, for it is really the bridge between spirit and matter.

Liberation through Yoga or unflinching Bhakti :

Liberation, spiritual freedom is attained through the practice of Yoga or intense unflinching Bhakti. The former is a 'spiritual exercise'. It as well means engagement in a spirit of someness and indifference. Yoga is both the 'process' which results in integration, and the goal 'integration' itself. It symbolises the process of training the character in the one great virtue of detachment and its result - someness and indifference. Sanyāsa - renunciation (of work) is the end of the spiritual exercise called Yoga. Another definition of Yoga in the Gītā is characterised by the unlinking of the link with suffering and pain. (6.29). The supreme goal of integration (yoga) is to see all things in the self and the self in all beings, to see 'the same' in everything. The Integrated man becomes Brahman which is changeless. This state can be reached by a man's own efforts, by detachment and renunciation which means 'someness and indifference' to all the pairs of opposite, character purified from the passions in previous births. The laborious journey from this world of time and space to one of the freedom of spirit, is called mokṣa. The Yogic technique is one such method while meditation and devotion

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to God is another.

Bhakti and Liberation :

Bhakti, symbolising Devotion, Loyalty and Love to Kṛiṣṇa, the personal God, also implies trust in Him and love of Him. According to Zaehner,⁵⁵ the Gītā starts from Buddhist and Sāṅkhya premises in which God plays no part at all, whereas in the Upanishads no clear distinction is made between the personal God and the impersonal Absolute, Brahman, though the latter is clearly subordinated to the former in Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (5.1). According to it, God is to be known by meditation, and by knowing Him a man is freed from all fetters (2.15). God is not yet an objecting love. In the Gītā (2.61) concentration on the personal God is mentioned in passing (tāni sarvāni saṁnyamya yuktāśīta matparaḥ), and in the last verse of Chapter V, Krishna obtrudes Himself into this atmosphere of perfect, static peace, and claims that it is rather by knowing Him as 'great Lord of all the world' that one attains to peace. It is for the first time in 6.30 that the integration of the self 'becoming Brahman' is brought into relationship with the love of Kṛiṣṇa, the personal God. It is the turning point, rather the watershed of the whole Book. God aids his devotees by His changing grace, raising them out of the phenomenal world into the domain of liberation where, though all things seem to cohere in One, distinctions yet remain, and so 'for him I am not lost, nor is he lost for Me'. (6.30). Devout love effaces all sin, because the intention is right, and none who practises it, even if they are women or ^{sinner} ~~self~~ would fail to win eternal rest (9.32). Unswerving devotion to God ensures deliverance from the ocean of recurring death. As pointed out in the Chapter on 'Bhakti yoga' of the Gītā, 'On Me alone let you

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Bhakti, symbolizing devotion, loyalty and love to the personal God, also implies trust in him and love of him. According to Ramanuja, the Gita states that devotion is the means in which God alone has no part at all, whereas in the domain of the impersonal Absolute, Bhagwan, though the latter is clearly subordinated to the former in *Upanishads* (2.17). According to it, God is to be known by meditation, and by knowing him a man is freed from all fetters (2.17). God is not yet an object of love. In the Gita (2.41) concentration on the personal God is mentioned in passing (*tanu matyaya yuktas*), and in the last verse of Chapter V, Krishna outlines himself into this atmosphere of perfect, static peace, and claims that it is rather by knowing him as 'great Lord of all the world' that one attains to peace. It is for the first time in 2.30 that the integration of the self 'becoming Bhagwan' is brought into relationship with the love of Krishna, the personal God. It is the turning point, rather the watershed of the whole book. God aids his devotees by his changing grace, relieves them out of the phenomenal world into the domain of liberation where, though all things seem to cohere in One, distinctions yet remain, and so 'for him I am not lost, nor is he lost for me' (2.30). Devotion effaces all sin, because the intention is right, and none who practices it, even if they are women or self-would, will to attain eternal rest (2.32). Unswerving devotion to God ensures deliverance from the ocean of recurring death. As pointed out in the Gita, 'On the whole let you

mind dwell, stir up your soul to enter Me, thenceforth in very truth in Me you will find your home'. (mayy eva mana ādhatsva, mayi buddhim niveśaya, nivasisyasi mayy eva ata ūrdhvam na saṁsayah. 12.8).

Zachner on Moksa - Liberation :

Moksa - Liberation, a spiritual freedom, is also considered by Zaehner⁵⁶ in his Introduction to the Bhagavad-Gītā. Liberation is the spiritual goal of both Hindus and Buddhists. In the Gītā it is the 'fruit' of the whole process of spiritual integration around the self. It is used in the Gītā in the sense of release from the bondage of work (2.39 ; 9.28) from old age and death (7.29) and from Material Nature itself to which (all) contingent beings are subject (13. 34). It is the way by which one approaches Brahman (2.72 ; 5.6.24) and becomes Brahman (5.24 ; 6.7 ; 14.26 ; 18.53) itself, the highest way and home from which 'there is no returning' (8.21 ; 5.17). Liberation means never to be born again (8.16), and once a man has reached this exalted state he is near to God Himself (4.9 ; 7.23 ; 8.7 ; 10.18 ; 9.25. 28, 34 ; 10.10 ; 11.15), participates in his mode of being (8.15 ; 13.18) and enters into Him (11.54 ; 12.8 ; 18.55) (Sa mām eti. 11.54; mām tattvato jñātvā viśat tad ānantaram 18.55). The liberated man having passed on clean out of the phenomenal world - the sphere of karma - action, enters the sphere of transcendent wisdom (jñāna) enjoying perfect peace (jñānam labdhvā param śāntim acirena-adhigacchati - 4.39).

Stages in the process of Liberation :

⁵⁷
Zaehner traces two stages in the process of liberation,

Path of Moksha - Liberation :

Moksha - Liberation, a spiritual freedom, is also considered by Jachner in his introduction to the Bhagavad-Gita. Liberation is the spiritual goal of both Hindus and Buddhists. In the Gita it is the 'fruit' of the whole process of spiritual integration around the self. It is used in the Gita in the sense of release from the bondage of work (1.20 : 2.28) from old age and death (7.20) and from material nature itself to which (all) conditioned beings are subject (13.34). It is the way by which one approaches Brahman (2.72 : 5.7.24) and becomes Brahman (5.24 : 6.1 : 14.26 : 18.53) itself, the highest way and hence 'that which' there is no returning' (8.91 : 9.17). Liberation means never to be born again (8.16), and once a man has reached this exalted state he is near to God himself (4.9 : 7.28 : 8.7 : 10.10 : 9.22.23, 24 : 10.10 : 11.15), participates in his mode of being (9.15 : 18.17) and enters into him (11.54 : 12.2 : 18.22) (as may also be seen from tattvato jñātvā vīśvātmā bhūmanīśvaram 18.25). The liberated man having passed on clean out of the phenomenal world - the sphere of karma - action, enters the sphere of transcendental wisdom (jnana) enjoying perfect peace (jnana-jyotiḥ param santam anantam - 4.39).

Stages in the process of Liberation :

Two stages in the process of Liberation

first there is the realization of the self as eternal, and secondly there is the discovery of God as identical in eternal essence but as distinct in power and personality. The revelation of the totality of God is very gradual. The emergence of a loving God out of an impersonal Brahman in and out of the experience of liberation is gradually brought out. God is described as the foundation of the All, both of time and eternity and liberation itself depends on Him. Further, the immortal state of Brahman is imperfect unless and until filled out with the love of God. As enjoined in the last chapter, the Lord asks Arjuna 'Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me. So will you come to Me ; I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me' (mam+manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yāji mām namaskuru mām evaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyo'si me - 18.65). This is the message of the Gītā - the union of Man with God.

Embree and the Gita :

The Columbia University Historian, Anisile Embree contributed the Preface to Mohini. M. Chatterji's 'The Bhagavad-Gita' or 'The Lord's Lay'. The Professor in his note on the Translation 58 commends it for special merits. It was written at a time when the critical scholarship of the nineteenth century was finding a fruitful response in Indian intellectual circle. As a believing Hindu, Chatterji made full use of his own insights and also drew upon the writings of the great classical Indian commentators. He as well showed awareness of the questions that were being asked in the world as to the character of the religious and philosophical structure of the Gītā. The copious notes prepared by him are of unique value. Out of the three main schools of interpretation of the Gītā - all of them having valuable insights, Chatterji prefers

Expre and the Gita :

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that of Śāṅkarācārya. According to him, the vedantic teaching that the Gītā is an exposition of the true knowledge that leads to the realization is preferable. The individual soul, accordingly, is not real, but is identical with Brahman, the ultimate reality. The catholic and the irenic spirit characteristic of the Gītā itself is as well evident in his translation and comments. He makes clear that other interpretations are both possible and valid.

The Convincing Method in the Gītā :

The Preface of the Gītā by Embree is fairly comprehensive in treating the theme of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Its meaning of human existence is no doubt common to most religious literature. The uniqueness and the secret of its enduring influence are to be found in the way the relevant questions are asked and the answers given in this 'New Testament' of the Hindus. The Gītā's approach to the meaning of man's existence is through the situation faced by Arjuna in the opening chapter. The real issue is not a warrior's seeming cowardice but a crisis of the soul. Arjuna being in the state of 'the Great Terror' implores Kṛiṣṇa to tell him what was good for him (II. 71). He needed an understanding of the true nature of his existence that would make it possible for him to participate in life without being overcome by the guilt and anxiety that threatened to destroy him and the social order of which he was a member. In this maze of confusion of action and the desire for action, the Lord lays emphasis on action without desire. That man whose undertakings are all without motive or desire for results, whose actions are burnt up in the fire of knowledge, the sages call him wise. Even though engaged in action he does nothing. Being equal-minded

The Convincing Faith in the Life :

The Preface of the life of Krishna is a very comprehensive in treating the theme of the Bhagavad-Gita. The meaning of human existence is no doubt common to most religious literature. The uniqueness and the secret of the spiritual influence are to be found in the way the relevant questions are asked and the answers given in this 'New Testament' of the Hindus. The Gita's approach to the meaning of man's existence is through the situation faced by Arjuna in the opening chapter. The real issue is not a warrior's seeming cowardice and a crisis of the soul. Arjuna being in the state of 'the Great Terror' is shown to be in a state of mind what was good for him (II. 71). He needed an understanding of the true nature of his existence that would make it possible for him to participate in life without being overcome by the guilt and anxiety that threatened to destroy him and the social order of which he was a member. In this case of confusion of action and the desire for action, the Lord gave emphasis on action without desire. That man whose understandings are all without motive or desire for results, whose actions are burnt to in the fire of knowledge, the sages call him wise. Even though one is in a state of confusion he does nothing, being equal minded

in success and failure, he is not bound ever though active.
(IV. 19-22).

Living means Action :

The Gītā recognizes that to live is to act the ascetic who thinks he can escape action by renouncing normal life is deluding himself, since ever the bare maintenance of the body would not be possible if one is inactive (III. 8). He is to act according to his dharma - the complex of duties and obligations ordained for him as a member of the social set-up. Embree quotes Carlyle's dictum in this context. 'Do the duty that lies nearest thee'. The crisis of the soul that led to the teaching of detached action did not seem to square with the fact of existence for Arjuna. Detachment from the fruits of action, from involvement in their results, could never follow from the simple command to obey life's demands. Some other answer is needed which is provided by the Lord through an analysis of man's nature.

Puruṣa and Prakriti in the Gītā :

According to the Gītā's analysis, there are two eternal self-existing classes of being in the universe (XIII. 19). One of these is puruṣa, translated variously as 'nature', 'self', 'man', and the other is prakriti translated as 'nature', 'matter', 'non-soul', or 'material nature'. The Puruṣa and Prakriti, soul and material nature, stand for a radical and uncompromising dualism in the later Sankhya philosophy, but in the Gītā, the duality is lessened and though beginningless, (IX. 19) both are related in a casual sense to the Absolute that is beyond them. Although soul and material matter need be separate, they are in fact found impinging on each other with the timeless soul, the puruṣa enmeshed

Living means Action :

The Gita recognizes that to live is to act the manner in which one thinks he can escape action by renouncing normal life is deluding himself, since even the bare existence of the body would not be possible if one is inactive (III. 10). It is to act according to his guna - the complex of duties and obligations ordained for him as a member of the social set-up. In the Gita's dictum in this context, 'by the duty that lies nearest thee'. The crisis of the soul that led to the longing for detached action did not seem to square with the fact of existence for Arjuna. Detachment from the fruits of action, from involvement in their results, could never follow from the single command to obey life's demands. Some other answer is needed which is provided by the Lord through an analysis of man's nature.

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in the flux of the eternally mutable prakriti.⁵⁹ The soul is no doubt changeless, all pervading, unmoving, immovable (II.24). As against this, the material nature, including not only the body, but also mental faculties, emotions, consciousness, is not a simple entity. It is composed of the three elements, or gunas - translated as 'strands'. It is because of these that material nature is in a constant state of motion. It is through the constant interweaving of the strands and through their presence in different proportions that the variety of human experience is created. For this simple reason, 'no one can rest for a single moment without performing an act, for all are made to act by the Nature-born strands. (III. 5). The soul is lodged in the body and takes on the qualities of its surroundings, including activity for some purpose. Since desired action bear fruits, rebirth takes place. The soul is continuously reborn in good or evil wombs. (¹³XIII. 21). The separation of the soul from the world of change and activity in which it has become involved even though as an onlooker demands its search. It aims at discovering of this indwelling self - the ever changeless, the indestructible, the illimitable. (²~~II~~. 18).

Self and Yoga :

The way to the discovery of the self and the attainment of the understanding of personal identity is through Yoga - a way of controlled and disciplined action. The yogic practitioner holding his thoughts in check, free from hopes and possessions .. with the mind fixed in a single point, firmly holding his body, head and neck erect .. serene and fearless reaches his goal. The disciplined man keeping his body in restraint comes to the peace that ends in calmness (Nirvāna) (⁶~~VI~~. 15). Both control

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and action are vital components in the yoga of the *Gītā*. Besides controlling the senses, yoga as well comprehends man's engagement in the life of action. According to the *Gītā*, the way of yoga provides the answer to those problems which eventually arise, namely those relating to acting without desire or seeking after end, or a knowledge of the man's essential being, called self-realization.⁶⁰ In the words of the *Gītā*, 'the art of acting without desire, is the best form of yoga.' It is the skill in action. (Yogah karmasu kauśalam - II. 2. 50). The ultimate secret of 'skill in works' is to make all-action sacrifice. This form of sacrifice is not a supplicatory or propitiatory rite, but an instrument for bringing the universe under man's control. Since activity is part of the cosmic order, the man who lives in this world and does not turn the wheel thus set in motion lives in vain (³ II. 16). On the other hand, while moving the wheel of sacrifice he does not become involved in the fruits of action, for it is the strands, the qualities of material nature that work. The material of sacrifice is the human activity itself. This activity as an inescapable commitment of existence can become an integral part of the turning wheel. The centre of sacrifice is the offering of all of life : knowledge, devotion, asceticism, good works to Krishna. The conclusion is that the *Gītā* is a theistic work. The finding of the self is only a preliminary to the great encounter with that Being who provides light to the universe. (¹¹ III. 30).

Brahman - the Ultimate Reality and Krishna :

The frequent reference to the Brahman⁶¹ denoting the nature of ultimate reality is generally thought of as the state of integration of the self, realized through yoga. He whose senses and

and action are vital components in the yoga of the Gita. Besides controlling the senses, yoga as well comprehends man's engagement in the life of action. According to the Gita, the way of yoga provides the answer to those problems which eventually arise, namely those relating to acting without desire or seeking after end, or a knowledge of the man's essential being, called self-realisation. In the words of the Gita, "The art of acting without desire, is the best form of yoga." It is the skill in action. (Yogah karmasu kauशल - II, 50). The ultimate secret of skill in work is to make self-action sacrifice. This form of sacrifice is not a supplementary or propitiatory rite, but an instrument for bringing the universe under man's control. Since activity is part of the cosmic order, the man who lives in this world and does not turn the wheel thus set in motion lives in vain (II, 10). On the other hand, while moving the wheel of sacrifice he does not become involved in the fruits of action, for it is the strand of the qualities of material nature that work. The material of sacrifice is the human activity itself. This activity as an inescapable commitment of existence can become an integral part of the turning wheel. The centre of sacrifice is the offering of all of life : knowledge, devotion, asceticism, good works to Krishna. The conclusion is that the Gita is a realistic work. Finding of the self is only a preliminary to the great encounter with that Being who provides light to the universe. (II, 30).

Stephan - the Ultimate Reality and Gita :

The frequent reference to the Stephan denoting the nature of ultimate reality is generally thought of as the state of inaction of the self, realised through yoga. The word denotes a

organs are under control, and who is devoted to inner knowledge and ever free from desire, fear and anger, is liberated. (V. 28). Brahman, according to the Gītā, is more than this. The Ultimate Being is a living personal deity identified as Kṛṣṇa. The goal of life, the most secret science, is that Kṛṣṇa should be regarded as the ultimate and one should devote himself to him. The three ways of attaining salvation frequently taught separately as Action, Knowledge and Devotion (Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti) are seen not as alternate courses but rather as three aspects of human existence, and these must be kept in a proper relationship. There is, however, no balancing of one thing against the other. Work is not a hindrance but a help to the doer who knows that while living in the midst of motion, the self is in fact untouched (XIV. 20-25).¹⁴ Emphasis is thus laid on the primacy of knowledge in the process of the separation of the real from delusion. The concluding verse of the Fourth Chapter entitled 'Jnana-Karma-Sanyāsa Yoga' enjoins Arjuna to 'cut as under with the sword of knowledge ignorance-born doubt, seated in his heart and engage in the right performance of action'. (IV. 42).⁴

Devotion and Meaningful Life :

Both works and knowledge are, however, overarched by the way of devotion (bhakti). Devotion, insists the Gītā, makes life meaningful.⁶² It is no doubt the easiest path to follow (VIII. 4),⁶ that leads to the fullest realization of the goal sought. But that devotion must have a response from beyond the self, an act of grace on the part of God. Finally through work, knowledge and devotion, it is possible to know God, the origin and end of all things, with His immanent presence in the

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world of nature and of spirit. But a vision of God can only come by an act of loving grace ^{11.} (XI. 52-53). Through Krisna's grace, Arjuna sees what even the Gods have not seen before : a revelation of the God of gods, whose splendour is that of a thousand suns, glorious but terrifying ^{11.} (XI. 6-23). The marvellous description of the theophany is regarded as the emotional climax of the Gītā. It is, however, not the end of the book. The positions already reached are summarised and reiterated without introducing new themes. Arjuna's doubts are fully resolved as he says in the last Chapter of the Gītā - 'by Thy grace I have attained remembrance (naṣto mohah smritir labdhā tvatprasādat mayā Acyuta). Arjuna came to know his true existence, and his self found its nature in a relationship with a Being who declared that only he who is freed from the notion of time, who neither grieves nor desires, neither hates nor loves, can know Me in reality, what and who I am. ^{10.} (XVIII. 55, 66).

Juan Mascaro and the Penguin Gītā -
The Search for Truth and Reality :

This translation, the first by Spanish scholar, who earlier lectured at Oxford on the Spanish Mystics and later on at the Cambridge University, is the most popular one. The author read modern and oriental languages, Sanskrit and English and, as such, is fully qualified for the task. He translated a selection of the Upanishads (a Penguin Classic) before he began the translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā. He as well translated the Dhammapada from the Pāli (a Penguin Classic). The Gītā Translation, first published in 1962, was reprinted fifteen times within a period 63 of sixteen years (between 1962-1978). According to the author,

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Juan Pascual and the Panchajanya Gita - The Search for Truth and Reality :

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the Sanskrit literature is on the whole a romantic one, interwoven with idealism and practical wisdom, and with a passionate longing for spiritual vision. He begins with the Gayatri Mantram - Tat Savitur varāṇīam Bhargo devasya dhīmahi Dhiyo yo nah praco-
dayāt - 'Let our meditation be on the glorious light of Savitri. May this light illumine our minds'. The poet of the Vedas who chanted these words saw into the future : the mind of India has never been tired in the search for Light. He sees in the Vedas the dawn of spiritual insight. In the Upanishads we have the full splendour of an inner vision. Here man goes into his own inner nature, and from the many he goes to the One. The Truth of the universe is Brahman : our own inner Truth is Atman. The sacred OM is a name for both Brahman and Atman. This can be divided into three sounds, but the three role into one : AUM. OM is the positive truth of all. Brahman cannot be defined beyond it is Infinite. It is beyond thought and beyond imagination. It is nothing in mind and nothing outside the mind, nothing past or present or future.

OM - the eternal world :

The nearest conception of Brahman is that it is a state of consciousness beyond time when SAT, CIT and ANAND, Being and Consciousness and Joy are One. ⁶⁴ Om - the eternal world - is all: what was, what is and what shall be, and what beyond is in eternity. All is OM. Brahman is all and Atman is Brahman. Atman is OM. Its three sounds, A, U and M are the first three stages of consciousness. Atman is His own pure state, the awakened life of supreme consciousness. It is neither outer nor inner consciousness, neither semi-consciousness nor sleeping

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stages of consciousness. Atman is his own pure state, the
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nor inner consciousness, neither semi-consciousness nor sleep.

consciousness, neither more consciousness nor unconsciousness. He is Ātman, the Spirit Himself, that cannot be seen or touched, that is above all distinctions, beyond thought and ineffable. The supreme proof of His reality lies in the union with Him. He is peace and love - Ātman, the self in each one of us and in all, is Brahman, the God, the Highest in us and in all.

The Essence of the Upanishads - Tat-Tvam Asi :

The essence of the Upanishads is summed up ⁶⁵ in the words TAT TVAM ASI 'That thou art'. Salvation is communion with Truth and 'Truth is victory' Satyameva jayate. The lofty doctrines of the Upanishads are in fact doctrines for the few. Men want a simple concrete God, or even a graven image of a god. They want a rule of life. The later seers of the Upanishads saw this and in the Īśa Upanishad there are ideas which are as well found in the Bhagavad-Gītā on the glory of God, as also on the importance of both knowledge and action. 'Behold the universe in the glory of God ; and all that lives and moves on earth. Leaving the transient, find joy in the Eternal : set not your heart on another's possession : Only actions done in God bind not the soul of man. He who ^{de} knowledge and action, with action overcomes death, and with knowledge reaches immortality, May life go to immortal life, and the body go to ashes. OM, O my soul, remember past strivings, remember ! O my soul, remember past strivings, remember !'

The World of Action and that of Mind :

⁶⁶ The Vedic times, according to Juan Mascaro, were times of action, and of all human actions. The sacrifice to the gods was the most important. The later tendency in man was to go

The Essence of the Upanishads - Sri Yogi Bala

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The Field of Action and that of Mind

The Vedic times, according to some scholars, were the time of action, and of all human actions. The sacrifice to the gods was to do

from the world of matter to the world of mind. The great words of the Upanishads TAT TVAM ASI 'That Thou Art' suggest the change from the world outside into our inner world. In the Īśa Upanishad God (Īśa) and not the word Brahman figures though the spirit of Brahman breathes through the Upanishad. There is a harmony of action and knowledge, of the immanent and the transcendent. All action, including religious ritual, can be a means of reaching the inner meaning of things. The vision of action with a consciousness of its meaning, according to this Spanish scholar,⁶⁷ is interwoven in the Bhagavad-Gītā with the idea of love. If life or action is the finite and consciousness or knowledge is the Infinite, love is the means of turning life into Light, the bond the union between the finite and the Infinite. In all true love there is the love of the Infinite in the person or thing we love.

The Gītā - a shrine in a vast Temple :

The Bhagavad-Gītā is taken by the author⁶⁸ as a little shrine in a vast temple, a temple which is both a theatre and a fair of this world. The war in the Gītā has a symbolic meaning. The war between the two forces of good and evil is for the rule of a kingdom which is the kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of the Soul. Arjuna becomes the soul of man and Krishna the charioteer of the soul. A spiritual reader of the Gītā would find in it the great struggle of the human soul. The war of imagery is even used by Krishna in the poem when at the end of Chapter 3, he says, 'Be a warrior and kill desire, the powerful enemy of the soul' and again at the end of Chapter 4, 'Kill therefore, with the sword of wisdom the doubt born of ignorance that lies in thy heart'. Posing the questions : How could the treachery, robbery and butchery of war

be reconciled with the spiritual vision and love of the Bhagavad-Gītā ? How could we reconcile it with the spirit of the Gītā, and of all true spiritual seers, as expressed in those words of Kṛiṣṇa ? Answering these questions, Mascaro quotes the Gītā 'when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others, then he goes to the highest path.' (13.28).

The learned scholar does not concentrate on the date of the Bhagavad-Gītā,⁶⁹ since the date of its revelation in time is of little spiritual importance. As there are no references to Buddhism in the Gītā and there are a few archaic words and expressions, some of the greatest scholars have considered it pre-Buddhistic, i.e. about 500 B.C. The simple and clear Sanskrit of the poem could as well point to an early date. The value of a spiritual poem lies in translating its light into life. It must be seen as a whole and an analytical approach will never reveal its full meaning.

The Music symphony of the Gītā :

The music symphony of the Bhagavad-Gītā⁷⁰ is as well recorded in the Introduction with the stirring sound of an impending battle, the great battle for the inner victory, and cry of the soul in despair ready to give up the struggle for fear of death and of annihilation of all passions and desires, and the body. Then follows the voice of the Eternal in man speaking to the soul in doubt and trembling about its immortality, followed by infinite serene and peaceful sounds. The soul has peace from passions and peace from fear and lower desires. Then follows the music of call to action, not action in time but that

be reconciled with the spiritual vision and love of the Bhagavad-Gita? How could we reconcile it with the spirit of the Gita and of all true spiritual texts, as expressed in those words of Krishna? Answering these questions, Huxford quotes the Gita when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others, then he goes to the highest path. (13.28).

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in Eternity, called Karma Yoga. These strains are followed by notes of eternal silence : it is vision, Jñāna Yoga. It is the descent of Eternity into time, the incarnation of the divine. Another call to action follows in which the work is prayer, the deep prayer of silence. It is the revelation of God in all things - beautiful and good. Rising above the vast harmonies of this movement, there is the note of infinite tenderness, called Love, offered in adoration to God who accepts the offering of a pure heart. The music rising again in tremendous crescendo seems to over-flow the limits of the universe. It is the vision of all things and of the whole universe in God. He is the God of creation as also of destruction, that of Immortality and equally of life and death. The vision of God as man, as the friend of the struggling soul is also revealed. In Krishna, the God of Love, we have the universal harmonies of Brahman in the universe. From the One in the many attained by love, we reach the splendour of all in the transcendent One.

The three guṇas and new harmonious melodies :

The new harmonies are introduced with the inclusion of the three guṇas, the forms of universe, the Tree of transmigration, the Tree of Life and the process from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth. These are terrible sounds of evil in destruction as also the pleasing ones of the good in all. The earthly melodies are followed by the glory of the sacred sounds OM TAT SAT, the Infinite beyond the beginning, the middle and the end of all our work. At the end of this great symphony, the different themes of the previous chapters are interwoven into one. The melodies of vision, love and work in Eternity

in Eternity, called *Kāya Yōga*. These attitudes are followed by notes of eternal silence. It is vision, *Īśvara Yōga*. It is the descent of Eternity into time, the incarnation of the divine. Another call to action follows in which the work is prayer, the deep prayer of silence. It is the revelation of God in all things - beautiful and good. Rising above the vast harmonies of this movement, there is the note of infinite tenderness, called Love, offered in adoration to God who accepts the offering of a pure heart. The music rising again in freedom transcends seems to over-flow the limits of the universe. It is the vision of all things and of the whole universe in God. He is the God of creation as also of destruction, that of immortality and equally of life and death. The vision of God as man, as the friend of the struggling soul is also revealed. In Krishna, the God of Love, we have the universal harmonies of Brahman in the universe. From the One in the many attained by love, we reach the splendour of all in the transcendent One.

The three gunas and new harmonious melodies :

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are simply reduced to the simple call of God to man - 'Come to me for thy salvation' (mam ekam saranam vraja). This is the symphony of the Bhagavad-Gītā according to the author of this translation. In it are several themes. There is Yoga ; in its spiritual form it is love, but the term is also used for Samādhi, a state of inner communion with the object of contemplation. Inner Yoga is said to be above the scriptures. It is spiritual experience, the only source of true spiritual faith not opposed to reason. It, however, demands absence of desires. The inner 'Light of Being' is revealed only when the clouds of becoming disappear. 'Even as all waters flow into the ocean, but the ocean never overflows.' Even so in the sage all desires enter in the same way. He attains peace, not the man who lusts after desires'. (II. 70). Earlier, describing the state of the man who has found joy in God, the Bhagavad-Gītā says : When in recollection he withdraws all his senses from the attraction of the pleasures of sense, even as a tortoise withdraws all his limbs, then his is a serene wisdom (sthitiprajñā). (II. 58).

Many themes in the symphony of the Gītā :

There are many themes in the symphony of the Bhagavad-Gītā but the central ones are three : Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma -⁷¹ Light, Love and Life. Jñāna - the centre of the Upanishads, the means of reaching the Brahman, also figures prominently in the Gītā. It places the man of Jñāna - of Light, above all men. He is in God. The three manifestations of Brahman revealed in Jñāna figure prominently in Gītā. These are Sat, Cit and Ananda : Light, Love and Life. Being is felt in the silence of the soul. With the surrender of the self-conscious, there

are simply produced in the mind. This is the only way to reach the state of liberation. In this translation, in its several forms, there is a state of inner communion with the object of contemplation. Inner Yoga is said to be above the scriptures. It is spiritual experience, the only source of true spiritual truth not opposed to reason. It however demands sacrifice of desires. The inner light of Being is revealed only when the clouds of becoming disappear. Even as all waters flow into the ocean, so the ocean never overflows. Even so in the sage all desires enter in the same way. He attains peace, not the man who lives after desires. (II. 70). Earlier, describing the state of the man who has found joy in God, the Bhagavad-Gita says: When in recollection he withdraws all his senses from the attraction of the pleasures of sense, even as a tortoise withdraws all his limbs, then his is a serene wisdom (atithya). (II. 58).

Many themes in the synonymy of the Gita:

There are many themes in the synonymy of the Bhagavad-Gita but the central ones are three: Jnana, Bhakti and Karma. Light, Love and Life, Jnana - the centre of the Upanishads. The means of reaching the Brahman, also figures prominently in the Gita. It places the Yogi - of light, above all men. The three manifestations of Brahman revealed in the Gita are Atma, Sat, Chit and Ananda: Light, Love and Life. Being is felt in the silence.

is a great peace of mind and body, eventually setting the movements of the body to rest. There is no thinking but there is a deep feeling of Being. This sense of Being is the sense of Brahman.

Bhakti - the bond of Union between man and God :

While Jñāna, the Light of God, is the highest theme in the Bhagavad-Gītā, it is Bhakti - Love - which is the bond of union between man and God. As the Lord says, 'the man of knowledge is My very self' (jñān tvātmai vā me matām - II. 17). Equally so is said of the devotee who reverts Me with single devotion. They are in Me and I too am in them (ye bhajanti tu mām bhaktyā mayi te tesu ca'py aham - IX. 29). 'Love is the messenger between the gods and man,' according to Socrates. Further it is love alone that unites the soul with God. The love of God must not be built up in our imagination, but must be tried by works. These, according to Mascaro,⁷² are in the spirit of the Bhagavad-Gītā. The vision of God is the reward of the love of man. In the Bhagavad-Gītā that love is interwoven with light. Love the power that moves the universe, the day of life, the night of death, the new day after death. The Gītā is a book of Light and Love but it is above all a book of Life.

Work is Life :

Next Karma - Action is work and work is life. It is often contrasted in this 'Song Celestial' with Jñāna - Knowledge or contemplation. External ritual is set in contrast with inner spiritual life. As a result of the great spiritual change that took place in the Upanishads, external ritual was replaced by

is a great peace of mind and body, eventually within the movements of the body to rest. There is no thinking but there is a deep feeling of being. This sense of being is the sense of being.

Shakti - the bond of union between man and God

While jnana, the light of God, is the highest theme in the Bhagavad-Gita, it is Shakti - love - which is the bond of union between man and God. As the Lord says, 'The man of knowledge is my very self' (Upanishad - 1. 17). Usually as is said of the devotee who reveres the deity, 'Thee are in me and I too am in thee' (Shakti - 1. 17). The Shakti is the power between the gods and man, according to devotees. Further it is love alone that unites the soul with God. The love of God must not be built up in our imagination, but must be tried by works. These, according to devotees, are in the spirit of the Bhagavad-Gita. The vision of God is the reward of the love of man. In the Bhagavad-Gita that love is interwoven with light. Love the power that moves the universe. The day of life, the night of death, the day after death. The Gita is a book of light and love but it is none all a book of life.

Work is life :

Next Karma - Action is work and work is life. It is often contrasted in this 'Song Celestial' with jnana - knowledge or contemplation. External ritual is set in contrast with inner spiritual life. As a result of the great spiritual change that took place in the Upanishads, external ritual was rejected in

stress on inner life. Besides the contrast, the word Karma has acquired a far deeper meaning in the Gītā.⁷³ All life is action and every little work in life, however humble, can become an act of creation and therefore a means of salvation, reconciling the finite with the Infinite. As the Lord says, 'Offer to Me all thy works and rest thy mind on the Supreme. Be free from vain hopes and selfish thoughts and with inner peace fight, casting off thy fear'. (mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi saṁnyasyā'dhyātmā-cetasā, nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā yudhyasva vigatajvarah - 3.30). Further, let the wiseman work unselfishly for the good of all the world (kuryād vidvāṁstathā'saktas' cikīrṣur lokasaṅgraham - 3.25). All men attain perfection when they find joy in their work, and that is possible only when their work is worship of God, because God is joy.

The Greatness of the Bhagavad-Gītā :

The greatness of the Bhagavad-Gītā is the greatness of the universe.⁷⁴ As the wonder of the stars in heaven only reveals itself in the silence of the night, so also the wonder of this poem only reveals itself in the silence of the soul. The author of the commentary Juan Mascaro, a Spanish, was enchanted by the mystery of the poem. He learnt Sanskrit for the sake of the Bhagavad-Gītā as he points out in his Introduction. He read every available translation to compare different interpretations, as also the commentaries of Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja, history of Indian philosophy and Sanskrit literature and every publication on the Bhagavad-Gītā as became available to him. He read the Sanskrit text again and again,⁷⁵ committing the most important verses to memory. For him, it became a poem to read in times

of sorrow and joy connecting it with the deepest moments of our life. There is no end to the reading of the text and recording one's thoughts and emotions awakened by the poem, and still one would find in it ingenuity and freshness. He is not tired of listening to the power and glory of the Lord and of hearing His words of life. The essence of the Bhagavad-Gītā is the vision of God in all things and of all things in God. Love leads to Light, but the Light is not ours. It is given to us as a reward for our love and our good work. He who has a good will and strives is never lost, and in the battle for eternal life, can never be a defeat unless we run away from the battle. The true progress of man on earth is the progress of an inner vision. The progress in science is to be in harmony with a spiritual progress. Scientific progress and moral progress must go hand in hand. It is not enough to have more, or even to know more, but to live more, and if we want to live more we must love more. 'Love is a treasure hidden in a field' and this field, according to the Gītā, 'is our own soul'. In the law of love, the more one gives the more one has.

One Light - the source of all religions :

Finally, the spiritual visions of man confirm and illumine each other. As pointed out ⁷⁶ by Mascaro, 'the cosmic greatness of Hinduism, the moral issues of Zoroaster, the joy in truth of Buddha, the spiritual victory of Jainism, the simple love of Tao, the wisdom of Confucius, the poetry of Shinto, the one God of Israel, the redeeming radiance of Christianity, the glory of God of Islam, the harmony of the Sikhs, might have different values, but they all come from One Light'. In them we have Lamps of

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 to the Gita, 'is our own soul'. In the law of love, the more
 one gives the more one has.

One Light - the source of all religions :

Finally, the spiritual vision of man confers and illumines
 each other. As pointed out by Max Muller, the cosmic greatness
 of Hinduism, the moral issues of Zarathustra, the joy in truth of
 Buddha, the spiritual victory of Jainism, the simple love of
 the wisdom of Confucius, the poetry of Shinto, the one God of
 Israel, the redeeming radiance of Christianity, the glory of
 of Islam, the harmony of the Sikhs, all have different values
 but they all come from One Light. In them we have lamps of

Fire that burn eternally to the glory of God'. The finite in man longs for the Infinite. Man sees the sun by the light of Sun and he sees the spirit by the light of his own spirit. The radiance of eternal beauty shines over this vast universe and in moments of contemplation we can see the eternal in things that pass away. In reading the scriptures and books of wisdom of the world, many spiritual experiences are recorded but there is only one spiritual faith and this faith is based on a vision of Truth, the truth of our Being. In the Bhagavad-Gītā, we have faith, a faith no doubt based on spiritual vision. In this vision we have Light. This Song calls us to Love and life. Every moment of our life can be the beginning of great things.

Maspero's personality and the Gītā :

Juan Mascaro 'Introduction' to the translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā is perhaps the best in the sense that the author integrates his personality with the spirit and faith of the Gita which he has studied with dedication and devotion. Even after repeated readings committing many verses to memory, his next attempt is an exercise in ingenuity providing him new room for thought. He finds himself insatiated and in a modest way his acquisition of spiritual knowledge provided by the poem is like a drop in the ocean. His comments are equally full of quotations from other religious texts, particularly the Old and the New Testament and writings of other classical and medieval philosophers. These are more in the nature of parallel ideas circulated at the other end. No attempt has been made by him to impose any western - secular or religious concept on

first that dawn eternally to the black of night. The finite
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the philosophical background of the Gītā. So also there are no references to Buddhism in the Gītā and he seems to place it about 500 B.C. as proposed by some of the greatest scholars.

Richard Gotshalk :

The American don of the University of Pennsylvania brought out his translation and commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā⁷⁷ in 1985. It is the fruit of an extended study and teaching of ancient Hindu philosophy for well over two decades. In his Introduction, the learned author poses the question about the relevancy of this poem for a western reader. The thoughtful articulation of the problematic of human existence which it embodies, grows out of traditions which, in his words, 'are alien to us'. Further, if one does not belong to the Hindu tradition, one is lacking altogether that heritage of assumptions and presuppositions which would enter into the vital matrix out of which a contemporary Hindu might find his way into the meaning of the Gītā. The strength and background of one's own participation in life, inflected through his traditions, however, depends upon the knowledgeable reading of the poem and listening to its words unfold its story and teaching. One can associate oneself in that common humanity and find the Gītā speaking to him as uttering another's voice, and providing a human vision and tradition on matters of ultimate concern to each one in human life. A reading of the Gītā is thoughtful and reflexive but the character and outcome of recurrent participation in reading and studying as well as rejecting through it, makes one gradually educated. He goes deeply into the⁷⁸ meaning or disclosure which is the heart of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Richard S. Tedlow :

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The Western encounter with the Gita :

For an effective encounter of a western reader with the Gītā, enabling him to reach the thought of the Gītā, he provides a translation highlighting the narrative character with a certain grandeur and forcefulness of language reflecting the personality of the speaker, the occasion for the dialogue and the content of the conversation. In a simple and direct form he portrays the living spirit of the poem. He has tried to keep the interpretation to a minimum but for providing clarity and explanation of certain terms he appends a commentary, followed by notes separately. Sufficient information is no doubt provided for preliminary orientation to the terms and notions referred to in the course of the poem. A general index of terms and ideas is no doubt very helpful.

Richard Gotshalk suggests ⁷⁹ that the Song in its present form was added in the dramatically appropriate place in the main epic story by the end of the second century B.C.

A.L. Basham :

The latest commentator on Bhagavad-Gītā is the late friend Basham of London and Canberra. Known for his famous work 'The Wonder that was India', the present study forms part of his posthumous book 'The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism' edited and annotated by Kenneth Zysk and published by Beacon Press in 1989. ⁸⁰ Forming a chapter of a little over 16 pages, 'The Bhagavad-Gītā and the Triumph of Thesis' is noted for the analytical study of Bhagavad-gītā, as he calls it, 'the Upanishad Sung by the Lord'. The work, according to him, corresponds in many respects to the Svetāśvatara Upanishad which does

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72

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for Siva in brief compass much the same as the Bhagavad-Gītā does for Viṣṇu, making him the Ultimate God, the source of the whole cosmos. In its finished form, the Gītā contains elements that the Svetāsvatara contains. The late Professor⁸¹ suggests that chapter one and chapter two down to verse 38 form a unity, holding brief for fighting a righteous war. The rest was added later by at least two hands. One of these was a philosopher of the upanishadic type interested in the ultimate impersonal Brahman, which he considered the final truth of the universe. The other was an impassioned theist, a devotee of Viṣṇu especially in his incarnation as Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva. In this context he as well refers⁸² to the Anugītā or Secondary Gītā, which occurs in the seventeenth book, the Āsvamedha-Parvan chapters 16-51. It is in the style of verse Upanishads. There are many references to Brahman, to the three universal constituents (guṇas) to early forms of Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophy, but there is no reference to the practice of devotion (bhakti). Basham draws the conclusion that the Anugītā was inserted into the Mahābhārata at a time when the Bhagavad-Gītā was devoid of all its theistic passages.

The Analysis of the Gītā :

An analysis of the chapters of the Bhagavad-Gītā shows⁸³ that they fall into two groups. The first of these consists of chapters two (verses 38 to the end), three, fifth, six, eight, thirteen, fourteen (verses 7 to 25), sixteen, seventeen and eighteen (verses 1 to 53). Most of these chapters contain one or two verses in which Kṛiṣṇa refers to himself as the highest God, but their main tenor is philosophical, explaining the

not give in order to compare with the text as the Upanishads show
 does for Vishnu, making him the Upanishad and the source of
 the whole cosmos. In the finished form, the Upanishad
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The Analysis of the Upanishad

In analysis of the chapters of the Upanishad it shows
 that they fall into two groups. The first of these consists
 of chapters two (verses 32 to the end), three, five, six, eleven,
 thirteen, fourteen (verses 7 to 32), sixteen, seventeen and
 eighteen (verses 1 to 32). Most of these chapters contain
 or two verses in which Upanishad refers to himself as the Upanishad
 or Upanishad Upanishad is philosophical, explaining the

nature of the cosmos, and the highest state, known as Brahman. The theistic verses in these chapters are possibly the interpolations of a third author or compiler, who was responsible for chapters four, seven, nine, eleven, fourteen (verses 1 to 6 and 26) and seventeen (verses 54 to the end) which are passionately theistic.

The second stratum of the Bhagavad-Gītā, according to the author, contains ⁸⁴ many important passages that adumbrate some of the doctrines of the later philosophical Hinduism. The right to work and not to its fruits (2.47) forms part of the doctrine of selfless activity of man confined to his status in life. The integration of the self and the achievement of the highest spiritual goal are possible only with the denial of fruits or thought of personal gain. This stratum as well includes the doctrine of the three gunas or universal constituents, the system of mental and spiritual training known as yoga, the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy closely associated with Yoga, and the mystic impersonal Absolute - Brahman. They are all mentioned in the Upanishads though not in a developed or detailed as the Brahman.

⁸⁵ Basham as well discusses the role of these important elements. The word guna meaning in its philosophical sense 'constituent quality' with its three strands - sattva (virtue, goodness), rajas (passion, activity) and tamas (darkness, dullness). The soul, according to Gītā, must try to detach itself from all the three gunas. Even sattva can serve as 'the last infirmity of a noble mind' by causing the soul to cling to wisdom and joy (14.6). Yoga appears in the Bhagavad-Gītā as a practical system of mental and spiritual development, for achieving complete detachment. Besides providing equipoise, the Yoga of the Bhagavad-

...of the ... and the ... state, known as ...
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 detachment ...

Gītā has a strong moral element (6. 29-32). Its goal is to become Brahman (6. 27), the ultimate impersonal spirit. There are also a few theistic verses which Basham believes to be later additions.

86 Sāṅkhya, in the Bhagavad-Gītā, is closely linked with Yoga as the theoretical aspect of the yogic course of spiritual training. Its closest enunciation is traced in the thirteenth chapter where a distinction is made between the field (kṣetra) or the material world, and the knower of the field (kṣhetrajña), the soul. The field is defined as consisting of the five gross elements (earth, air, water, fire and akas - ether), the ego (aḥṅkāra), consciousness (buddhi), and the unmanifest (avyakta), equivalent to the Prakṛiti (nature) of later Sāṅkhya. Together with these, the field is composed of the eleven senses. These are, with the mind as the coordinating senses, the five senses of perception (hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell) and the five senses of action (speech, grasping, locomotion, excretion and copulation). The Bhagavad-Gītā also adds certain emotions and senses, like desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, thought and constancy (13. 1-6). All phenomena take place in nature (Prakṛiti) and Puruṣa - male or person - is involved with nature. He is intimately linked with the three gunas, with the various components of the Prakṛiti. The process of transmigration continues through the connection between the two.

87

Beyond all things is Brahman, the impersonal world spirit, the goal of all spiritual striving. Brahman is realised by those who subdue their desires and eschew their egoism. On death they go to the nirvāṇa of Brahman (2. 71-72) - the highest state of bliss. The use of the word nirvāṇa in the Bhagavad-Gītā

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80 Sankhya, in the Shanvash-tika, is closely linked with Yoga as the theoretical aspect of the yoga course of spiritual training. Its closest emanation is traced in the thirteenth chapter where a distinction is made between the field (ksetra) or the material world, and the knower of the field (ksetrajna), the soul. The field is defined as consisting of the five gross elements (earth, air, water, fire and ether), the five subtle elements (sound, air, water, fire and ether), the five senses (indriyas), consciousness (buddhi), and the unmanifest (avyakata). Together equivalent to the prakriti (nature) of later Sankhya. Together with these, the field is composed of the eleven senses. These are, with the mind as the coordinating sense, the five senses of perception (hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell) and the five senses of action (speech, grasping, locomotion, excretion and copulation). The Shanvash-tika also adds certain emotions and senses, like desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, thought and constancy (13, 1-6). All phenomena take place in nature (prakriti) and Purusha - male or person - is involved with nature. He is intimately linked with the three gunas, with the various components of the prakriti. The process of transformation continues through the connection between the two.

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is suggestive, according to Basham, of its date posterior to Buddhism. The reference to Karman - meaning religious activity - as a kind of sacrifice (4. 23-33) performed in self-surrender, without attachment to the result (18. 6) is equally associated with the second stratum.

The third and the last stratum⁸⁸ of the Bhagavad-Gītā is thoroughly theistic. It is said to be the work of a literary genius who, according to Basham, spread chapters and brief interpolations throughout the whole text and accorded it some degree of unity, making it sometimes difficult to disentangle the second and the third strata. Here Kṛiṣṇa becomes the incarnation of Viṣṇu. He is God Almighty. All things and all beings have emanated from Him and subsist in Him (9. 4). The tremendous theophany is described in the eleventh chapter with Kṛiṣṇa displaying his supernatural splendour in his transcendent form with the 'brilliance of a thousand suns'. At the same time, 'the deluded world does not recognise me as unborn and changeless (7. 25) ; Fools scorn me, because I have taken on human form ; they understand nothing of my higher nature as the Great Lord of all beings'. (9. 11).

Kṛiṣṇa, as God, is above all things including the impersonal Brahman, and God as prior to Brahman. In a passage (14. 3-4) Kṛiṣṇa says, 'My womb is the great Brahman, in that I place the embryo and thence is the arising of all beings'. Here the neuter Brahman seems to be equated with the feminine Prakṛiti, the primeval nature and becomes a sort of spouse of God, looking forward, according to Basham, to the sakti of Tantrism. The most important new doctrine in the Bhagavad-Gītā is bhakti⁸⁹ - devotion to God. It demands no costly sacrifices or severe penances, nor a long course of yoga or mental concentration. A leaf, a flower, a

is suggestive, according to Basham, of the idea of the 'sublimity' of the reference to Krishna - meaning religious activities as a kind of sacrifice (4. 13-15) contained in self-surrender without attachment to the result (18. 9) is equally associated with the second stratum.

The third and the last stratum of the Bhagavad-Gita is thoroughly theistic. It is said to be the work of a literary genius who, according to Basham, spread chapters and brief instructions throughout the whole text and accorded it some degree of unity, making it sometimes difficult to disentangle the second and the third strata. Here Krishna becomes the incarnation of Vishnu. He is God Himself. All things and all beings have emanated from Him and subsist in Him (2. 4). The tremendous theophany is described in the eleventh chapter with Krishna displaying his supernatural splendour in his transcendental form with the brilliance of a thousand suns. At the same time, the deluded world does not recognise me as unborn and changeless (7. 25) ; fools scorn me, because I have taken on human form ; they understand nothing of my higher nature as the Great Lord of all beings. (9. 11).

Krishna, as God, is above all things including the imperishable Brahman, and God as prior to Brahman. In a passage (15. 1-4) Krishna says, 'My word is the great Brahman, in that I place the earthy and therefore is the arising of all beings. Here the need Brahman seems to be equated with the technical Brahmin, the nature and becomes a sort of spouse of God, looking forward according to Basham, to the sakti of Tantra. The most important doctrine in the Bhagavad-Gita is bhakti - devotion to God. It demands no costly sacrifices or severe penances, nor a long

libation of water are sufficient offerings to God provided they are offered with loving devotion (9. 26). It involves constant consciousness and love of God. All actions are to be done for the love and glory of God with constant thought of Him (9. 27 ; 13. 15, 57). A person who is a devotee of Kṛiṣṇa in the true sense is relieved of the burden of his past Karman. We are told in the Bhagavad-Gītā that even if a man of very evil conduct devotes himself to Kṛiṣṇa alone, his pious intention will count as virtue, his soul will become righteous, and he will go to eternal rest. An attitude of bhakti towards God is open to all irrespective of social status or sex (9. 30-32). Kṛiṣṇa declares that the man who at the hour of death bears him in mind with devotion goes straight to him (8. 5). In this context the reality of other gods is not denied,⁹⁰ they are all subsumed in him and emanate from him. Thus, those who worship and sacrifice to other gods with devotion and faith are in fact worshipping Kṛiṣṇa, though they do not know him as he really is (9. 23-24).

Incarnation :

Incarnation (avatāra) 'coming down' is one of the most important new doctrine of the Bhagavad-Gītā.⁹¹ As a normal human being he has been born many times in the normal way. (bahunā me vyatītāni janmāni - 4. 5). Yet he is also the unborn Lord of all beings, who through his supernatural power (māyā) has come to be in human form. He takes birth for the protection of the good, the destruction of the evil, and the establishment of righteousness (4.8). "Whenever righteousness (dharma) falls and unrighteousness raises its head", says the Kṛiṣṇa, "I come

liberation of water are sufficient offerings to God provided they are offered with loving devotion (9.26). It involves constant consciousness and love of God. All actions are to be done for the love and glory of God with constant thought of Him (9.27 : 13.12, 13). A person who is a devotee of Krishna in the true sense is relieved of the burden of his past karma. We are told in the Bhagavad-Gita that even if a man of very evil conduct devotes himself to Krishna alone, his glorious intention will count as virtue, his soul will become righteous, and he will go to eternal rest. An attitude of bhakti towards God is open to all irrespective of social status or sex (9.32-33). Krishna declares that the man who at the hour of death bears him in mind with devotion goes straight to him (9.34). In this context the reality of other gods is not denied, they are all subsumed in him and emanate from him. Thus, those who worship and sacrifice to other gods with devotion and faith are in fact worshipping Krishna, though they do not know him as he really is (9.33-34).

Incarnation :

Incarnation (avatara) 'coming down' is one of the most important new doctrine of the Bhagavad-Gita. As a human being he has been born many times in the human form (Brahma me vyeshtam jagadai - 4.8). He takes birth for the Lord of all beings, who through his appearance, the world has come to be in human form. The text states that the destruction of the evil, and the establishment of the good, the destruction of the evil, and the establishment of righteousness (4.8). "Whenever righteousness is lost, and unrighteousness takes its place, I come into the world."

to birth on earth'. The glory of the Lord is as well mentioned in several other verses, as for instance, in reference to 'I am the reason in the rational, the glory in the glorious, the power devoid of passion and desire in the powerful (7. 10-11)' and 'whatever is powerful, fortunate or strong springs from a portion of my glory' (10. 41). Basham refers ⁹² to a feature of the Bhagavad-Gītā which defends the varṇāśrama system. (3.35). The word dharma suggests the respective duties of the members of different classes in the social set-up. The first half of the eighteenth and last chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā as well concentrates on people conforming to their enjoined duties, dedicating all work to God in a spirit of detachment and devotion to Him.

The Bhagavad-Gītā and several authors :

Finally, according to Basham, ⁹³ ancient texts must be allowed to speak for themselves, and on this basis the Bhagavad-Gītā emerges as a composition of more than one hand, with at least two main authors whose doctrines are very different. While the chronology of the text presents great problem, it might be suggested that the first part of the Bhagavad-Gītā was composed at a time when the ethics of the warrior, glorifying righteous warfare and stressing the martial values were being questioned. This indicates that the whole of the Bhagavad-Gītā is posterior to the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the fifth century B.C. The theistic stratum associated with Vāsudeva, also known as Kṛiṣṇa, is evident from inscriptions and other sources from the second century B.C. onward. Its compilation may have taken two hundred years or more, and the text of the Bhagavad-Gītā was complete in its final form not much ⁹⁴ later than about 100 B.C.

The Bhagavad-Gita and several authors

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An Assessment of Basham's Approach :

Basham's analytical approach is interesting. He is clear and precise in his statements. Like other western scholars in general, he suggests that the theistic portions of the Hindu texts have much in common with the theology of Christianity, and this, according to him, could be one of the reasons for its being so widely read in the Western world. Further, we need not disparage either the medieval commentators on Hinduism or the schoolmen of medieval Christianity. They produced brilliant philosophical systems and did much to promote the religious systems of their faith. Their aims, however, were different from those of modern critical scholarship, which as far as possible approaches such texts with an open mind. The comments of the late professor seem to justify the title of the chapter 'The Bhagavad-Gita and the Triumph of Theism'. The final note of the Bhagavad-Gītā is no doubt theistic but it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line of demarcation, singling out the monistic element in the text as the contribution of another author. The text has to be read and accepted in its composite form and its date is certainly earlier than the fourth century B.C. since Megasthenes specifically mentions the two theistic sects of Herakles and Dionysos. The latter is identified with Kṛiṣṇa and his cult and Method is Mathurā associated with this cult and its divinity.

A.L.Herman :

A few other western scholars have taken notice of the philosophy and religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā. These include

An Assessment of Kashyap's Approach

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A. L. Serman :

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A.L. Herman. He has a section of the Bhagavad-Gītā and its philosophy in his book - 'An Introduction to Indian Thought'. In this one finds a critical commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā pointing to the myriad philosophical problems and puzzles of the Gita, highlighting the translation of this long poem. Herman in his work explains the basic concerns of Indian philosophic and religious thought set forth in three main texts - the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā. In his search for the central themes moving through them all, the author identifies basic issues and querries of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and religion which were of great concern to all philosophers - past and present. Many values, opinions, similiarties and differences are traced between the nature of philosophy of the orient and the occident. The section relating to the Bhagavad-Gītā and its Philosophy (F) covering about 140 pages, provides its Background, Religion, Metaphysics and the Epistemology and its Ethics. As one breezes through the pages of this book and particularly this section, one finds the author obscuring his meaning by introducing such technical terms of philosophy and metaphysics as are beyond the understanding of an ordinary reader. The discussion is sometimes so prolonged that it becomes difficult to ferret out the real intention of the author. The concluding para at the end of discussion after every sub-section, however, provides a great relief. According to the author, the Gītā stands as a speculative philosophic extension of Vedic and Upanishadic doctrines. But in that extension, the Gītā develops a new way to human happiness of its own, which interestingly combines both of the previous ways.

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The Gītā and the Saviour Game :

In the words of Herman, 'the religion of the Gītā lies essentially in the Saviour Game and its necessary conditions'.⁹⁶ His analysis suggests that a Lord or God exists. In the Gītā, this is, of course, Viṣṇu. When the dharma wavers and becomes dim and with it follows the growth of adharma and increase of human suffering and panic, The Lord recognises the trouble and responds to it by descending into that time and place as a man. Thus, the Avatāra or Saviour is born, and in this case he is Lord Kṛiṣṇa.

Herman's view - The Gītā an amalgam of several philosophical works :

According to Herman,⁹⁷ two metaphysical and epistemological systems apparently inconsistent and yet are merged in the Gītā. These are the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta. The former holds that there are two kinds of basically real stuffs in the universe : puruṣa (spirit) and prakṛiti (matter). The former is only an observer and possesses isolation and neutrality. It is the seer and is wholly inactive. Prakṛiti on the other hand is referred to as 'primal nature' or 'nature' or 'matter'. It evolves the entire creation or the universe. The Gītā holds the advaita Vedānta theory that Brahman alone is real and that Ātman is identical with Brahman. There are two forms of Brahman, a higher and a lower. The higher Brahman maintains the world, the lower Brahman is manifested. Māyā is the power of higher Brahman by which lower Brahman is manifested. Further, bondage is the result of avidyā, hence mokṣa will be a function of jñāna. Moreover Brahman is immanent in man as

Philosophy of the East as a system of thought

Atman and Brahman is identical with Atman.⁹⁸ The Gītā accepts this assumption from the Upanishads, for it is the key to explaining the nature of avidyā - bondage, mokṣa and Jñāna - Yoga. It is by way of the jñāna of Atman that release occurs, that avidyā is dispelled and that bondage is annuled. And it is the same Atman that dwells in all beings (Ī. 16-17 ; II. 30). The imperishable holy Atman sealed in the body is beginningless and nirguna. It neither acts nor acted upon. (Sarīrastho 'pi kaunteya na karoti na lipyate - XIII. 29, 31).⁹⁹ In the words of Herman, the Bhagavad-Gītā is neither Sāṅkhya darsana nor Vedānta darsana, but something quite distinct and unique.

The Gītā - an amalgamation of several philosophical views :

The mutually contradictory doctrines are more apparent than real. He, however, proposes that the Gītā is not a single philosophic work at all, but rather an amalgamation of philosophic works. It consists of several messages and speaks with several voices to many different people. There are two views of philosophy in the Gītā, one religious and the other metaphysical. The two are quite consistent with one another. They stand in the same mutual relationship as are the separate social stages of the āśramas. The Gītā-darsana wants to maintain that each view, the religious and the metaphysical, is just as good or right, or true as the other, when related to a particular person at a particular level of understanding. Maturing and growing in Gītā-darsana implies mobility and that too a progressive one related to the self against a metaphysical background, consisting of the law of karma, the theory of guṇa nature and the doctrine of samsāra. The movement, as such, is from the less

advanced to the more advanced stage of understanding the self till final liberation. The author presumes that the metaphysical monistic view and the religious pluralistic view are harmonious and mutually compatible. Both can be seen as stages from which change and growth can take place, but neither stage is superior to or better than the other. They are appropriate to particular needs and understandings of persons in these stages.

A Carefully compartmentalized dualism :

The Gita-darsana is a carefully compartmentalized dualism of two quite distinct philosophies, established for at least two quite distinct kinds of persons, identified by their conspicuous gunas. The two stages of religion and metaphysics, like the asramas, are indicative of levels of understanding, depending on the varnas, yogas and gunas of those stages. The Gita-darsana advocates, according to the author,¹⁰⁰ both the ordinary as well as the extraordinary norms of the cultural pattern. It as well includes an ethics and a doctrine about human free will. The religious stage holds a belief in the reality of heaven, hell and God. Its ethos is goal-oriented and purposive. The ethics of the religious stage, moreover, believes in the reality and the necessity of free human will, and its ethics as well as its social philosophy are built around this belief. The metaphysical stage is characterised by a monistic metaphysics and by a rejection or transcending of the pluralism of the religious stage.

Only one Ultimate Reality :

There is only one ultimate reality for the metaphysical stage. There is no survival of a personal self after liberation

A carefully contemplated dialogue

The dialogue is a carefully contemplated dialogue of two quite distinct philosophies, established for at least two quite distinct kinds of persons, identified by their corresponding names. The two stages of religion and metaphysics, like the dialogue, are indicative of levels of understanding, depending on the values, values and values of these stages. The dialogue advocates, according to the author, both the ordinary as well as the extraordinary norms of the cultural system. It as well includes an ethics and a doctrine about human free will. The religious stage holds a belief in the reality of heaven, hell and God. The ethics is goal-oriented and comprehensive. The of the religious stage, however, believes in the reality and the necessity of free human will, and its ethics as well as social philosophy are built around this belief. The metaphysical stage is characterised by a realistic relativistic and by the notion or transcendence of the existence of the religious stage. There is only one ultimate reality for the metaphysical stage. There is no survival of a personal self after death. There is only one ultimate reality for the metaphysical stage.

or mokṣa. Further, there is only the One, the Real, God head, Brahman or the unmanifest. The yogas and goals of the two stages are equally different. In the religious one, bhakti-yoga must be seen, the most appropriate way of securing that goal. Mokṣa or release is the end of the metaphysical stage while the religious one is heaven or earth-oriented. The yoga characterising the metaphysical stage is, of course, jñāna, 'the yoga of knowledge' or metaphysical realization. The dhyāna, 'the yoga of meditation,' is a necessary preliminary for calming the mind and making bhakti yoga as well as jñāna yoga possible. Hence dhyāna-yoga is in both the stages. So also Karma-yoga might also be a useful adjunct to either the religious or the metaphysical stage. It can be used by yogis in religious stage as well as in the metaphysical stage. Finally, there is a pluralism and a realism throughout the Gīta darsana.

Summing-Up :

In a review of the twentieth century contributions by the western scholars to the Gītā literature, one finds that the sacred text was widely read by the intellectuals as a good piece of Sanskrit poetry and Hindu religion and philosophy. The historicity of Kṛṣṇa, and the cult of Bhāgavatism were accepted. It was generally believed among the scholars of religion that monotheism of the Gītā was taken as still in the formative stage. Several new propositions were no doubt raised and the dust raised by the old controversy of the New Testament and its impact on the Gītā raised by Lorinser was finally laid to rest. The Christian religious text being posterior to the Gītā was in no way responsible for the ethical ideals of the Gītā. It was, however, proposed by Rudolf Otto that the Gītā in its present form was not the contribu-

tion of a single scholar but had its different layers. The original Gītā was a short one. This pupil of Garbe agreed with his teacher that these were later additions due to experiments of an ancient Vedic sacrificial theology and speculation about Brahman, but differs with him in a majority of cases. According to Otto, the present text is not its original version which consisted of the discourse between Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna on the immortality of the soul, the vision of Viśvarūpa of Kṛiṣṇa, the unfolding of the doctrine of pre-determination in which God's will works and its acceptance is taken as imperative. The God of the Bhagavad-Gītā is a peculiar combination of a personal God and the whole world.

Bhagavad-Gītā The Indian Bible - Catholic rather than critical :

Otto's 'patch work guilt' view of the Gītā has been criticised by several scholars including Edgerton and the Indian Orientalists. He is censured for many distortions, suppressions of the true and suggestions of the false facts. The Gītā is, according to Indian orientalists and has been, a divinely inspired unity, and that any attempt to prove otherwise is ill-informed, malicious or both. It represents in the best and the most beautiful manner the spirit of India, the spirit of synthesis and reconciliation. Edgerton calls it 'India's Holy Bible'. He accepts the unity of the Gītā, as for many centuries it has been handed down as a unit in its existing form. The Gītā values the emotional and the concrete above the rational and the abstract for making the salvation easy for the common man. 'The great work', in his words, 'has been very successful in interwinning speculative thought with fervid devotion', and it might easily be regarded as the noblest and perfect expression of modern Hinduism. The author

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of the Gītā, according to Edgerton, was Catholic than critical, more inclined to piece together than to worry over the differences between them. He was finally in sympathy with Kṛiṣṇa worship as with the philosophy of the Ātman.

An uncompromising irenicon of harmony :

The origin and development of the Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva cult and its place in the Bhagavad-Gītā are highlighted by William Douglas Hill who wrote his commentary along with the translation of the Text later in the twenties. The purpose of the poem, according to this scholar, was to insist on the absolute supremacy of Kṛiṣṇa-Vāsudeva and at the same time to conciliate the enemies of the cult. It is called by him as an uncompromising irenicon - a proposal that attempts to create harmony between conflicting view points. The Brahman of the Gītā is personified in Kṛiṣṇa who is Ātman, also called Puruṣa - corresponding to the 'Puruṣa-sūktā' of the Rig-Veda. As Īśvara - the transcendent Ruler and Lord - he descends to play a special part in the life of the world and its people.

Kṛiṣṇa supplants Brahman :

In taking stock of the contribution of the late spalding professor at Oxford Ralph. C. Zachner, one is impressed by his comprehensive comments. He considered Hill's translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā as very much readable, Edgerton's notes fuller and Lamotte's study in French as scholarly and lucidly objective, who has anticipated much that he has to say. He considers the Gītā as a far more unitary work than most modern scholars have been prepared to concede. He quotes Lamotte that 'contrary to

of the Gita, according to Edgerton, was Catholic than critical, more inclined to place together than to worry over the differences between them. He was finally in sympathy with Krishna worship as with the philosophy of the Atman.

An unorthodox interpretation of harmony

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Krishna supplies the Brahman :

In taking stock of the contribution of the late spiritual professor of Oxford, Ralph C. Archibald, one is impressed by his comprehensive comments. He considered Hill's translation of the Bhagavad-Gita as very much readable, Edgerton's notes fuller. Lamotte's study in French as scholarly and incisively objective. He has anticipated much that he has to say. He considers the Gita as a far more unified work than most modern scholars have been prepared to concede. He quotes Lamotte that 'contrary

what one might suggest the return of the soul into Brahman is not yet the final stage or the last stage of perfect deliverance'. Kṛiṣṇa, according to him, has supplanted Brahman both in theodicy and cosmology, and also in eschatology - theology dealing with the Ultimate. It is union with Him which is the final stage of deliverance. According to Zachner, from the contents of the Gītā, it is clear that both the principal teachings of the Upanishads and of early Buddhism were familiar to the author of the Gītā, as also the dualistic teaching commonly called Sāṅkhya. The late Professor traces two stages in the process of liberation, first the realization of the self as eternal and secondly the discovery of the God as identical in eternal sense but as distinct in power and personality. There is the emergence of a living God out of an impersonal Brahman.

Action without desire best form of Yoga :

Several other scholars have commented on the Gītā, either by way of Foreword or as an independent essay and of course the Penguin translation by Juan Mascaro. Embree and Basham, as historians, have made an analytical study, assessing the contents and then interpreting these. Embree calls the Gītā as the 'New Testament of the Hindus'. Its meaning of human existence is no doubt common to most religious literature. The Professor from the Columbia University finds both control and action as vital components in the yoga of the Gītā, and the art of acting without desire is the best form of yoga. The Gītā is no doubt a theistic work, and the finding of the self is only the beginning of the great encounter with that Being who provides light to the universe. Both work and knowledge are overarched by the way of devotion (bhakti)

that one might suggest the return of the soul to its original state is not yet the final stage of the last stage of perfect realization. According to him, the attainment of the final state of liberation, and consequently, and also in psychology - theology, is the ultimate. It is union with the divine in the final state of deliverance. According to Jachner, from the contents of the text it is clear that both the ontological teachings of the Vedas and of early Buddhism were familiar to the author of the Upanishads. As also the dualistic teaching commonly called Jachner. The author traces two stages in the process of liberation, first the realization of the self as eternal and secondly the discovery of the self as identical in eternal sense and as distinct in power and personality. There is the emergence of a living God out of an impersonal Brahman.

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which alone makes life meaningful. But a vision of God can only come by an act of loving grace.

The Bhagavado-Gitopanishad of several authors :

Basham in his essay of sixteen pages entitled 'Bhagavad Gita and the triumph of Theism' calls it the Bhagavad-Gitopanishad - the Upanishad sung by the Lord. According to his analysis of the chapters, two or three authors contributed to the Gītā, as is evident from the different strata in the long poem. As such, the Bhagavad-Gītā emerges as a composition of more than one hand, with atleast two main authors whose doctrines are very different. He as well proposes that the theistic portion was of the Hindu text having much in common with the theology of Christianity. That adds to its popularity in the West.

Love, Life and Light in the symphony of the Gita :

The Oxbridge scholar Juan Mascaro of Spanish origin learnt English and Sanskrit to read and translate as also interpret the Text in its metaphysical, religious and theistic context. Mascaro suggests that the Vedic times were those of action, the dawn of spiritual insight ; in the Upanishads we have the full splendour of an inner vision. The vision of action with a consciousness of its meaning is interwoven in the Bhagavad-Gītā with the idea of love. If life or action is the finite, and consciousness or knowledge is the infinite, love is the means of turning life into light. In all true love there is the love of the Infinite in the person or thing we love. There are many themes in the symphony of the Bhagavad-Gītā but the central one are three - Jñāna, Bhakti, and Karma - Light, Love and Life. While Jñāna, the Light of God

The Bhagavad-Gita as a treatise on the philosophy of life

Barham in his essay on the Bhagavad-Gita and the philosophy of life, calls it the Bhagavad-Gita. According to his analysis of the characters, two or three authors contributed to the Gita, as is evident from the different styles in the long poem. As such, the Bhagavad-Gita emerges as a composition of more than one hand, at least two main authors whose theories are very different. He as well proposed that the theistic portion was of the Hindu text having much in common with the theory of Jaimini. He adds to its popularity in the West.

Love, life and light in the synthesis of the Gita

The Oxford scholar John Duns Scotus of Scotland writes in English and Sanskrit to read and translate as also interest the text in its metaphysical, religious and theistic context. He suggests that the Vedas were those of action, the dawn of spiritual insight in the Upanishads we have the full revelation of an inner vision. The vision of action with a consciousness of its meaning is interwoven in the Bhagavad-Gita with the idea of love. If life or action is the finite, and consciousness or knowledge is the infinite, love is the means of turning life into light. In all true love there is the love of the infinite in person or thing we love. There are many forms in the world of the Bhagavad-Gita but the central one are three - Love, Life and Light.

is the highest theme in the Bhagavad-Gītā, it is bhakti - love, which is the bond of union between man and God. This love of God must not be built in our imagination, but must be tried by action. The Gītā is a book of Light and Love but it is above all a book of Life. Karma - Action is work and work is life.

The Vision of God - the essence of the Gītā :

Mascaro, who read the Sanskrit text again and again, committing the important verses to memory, found his own thoughts and emotions awakened by the poem, every time with ingenuity and freshness. He is never tired of listening to the power and glory of the Lord and of hearing his words of life. The essence of the Bhagavad-Gītā is the vision of God in all things and of all things in God. The true progress of man is that of his inner vision. It is not enough to have more or even to know more, but to live more for which we must love more. Love is the treasure hid in a field which is our soul.

Reference has also been made to the contributions to Richard Gotshalk and A.L.Herman. The Bhagavad-Gītā, according to Richard, provides a human vision and tradition on matters of ultimate concern to all irrespective of time and space. A reading of the Gītā is thoughtful and reflexive. The knowledgeable reading of the poem and listening to its words unfold its story and teaching on matters of common concern to each one in human life. One's participation in reading and study and reflection makes one gradually educated.

Finally, as pointed out by L.D. Barnett, who published a translation of the Bhagavad-Gita in 1905, 'Millions have heard

is the highest theme in the Bhagavad-Gita, it is Love - Love which is the bond of union between man and God. This love of God must not be built in our imagination, but must be rooted in action. The Gita is a book of light and love but it is above all a book of life. Karma - Action is work and work is life.

The Vision of God - The essence of the Gita :

Students who read the Sanskrit text again and again,

committing the important verses to memory, found his own thoughts and emotions awakened by the poem, every time with intensity and freshness. He is never tired of listening to the power and glory of the Lord and of hearing his words of life. The essence of the Bhagavad-Gita is the vision of God in all things and of all things in God. The true progress of man is that of his inner vision. It is not enough to have more or even to know more, but to live more for which we must love more. Love is the treasure hid in a field which is our soul.

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Richard Gotshalk and A.J. Newman. The Bhagavad-Gita, according to Richard, provides a human vision and tradition on matters of ultimate concern to all irrespective of time and space. A reading of the Gita is thoughtful and reflective. The knowledge gained of the poem and listening to its words unfold the story and teaching on matters of common concern to each one in human life. One's participation in reading, study and reflection makes one gradually educated.

Finally, as pointed out by E.W. Barnett, who established the Bhagavad-Gita Society in 1905, millions have heard

it (the Gita), read it, taught it, and found in it the largest hope for the soul's Godward striving'. And their belief has not been utterly vain, for the Gītā has a Gospel to deliver, telling of a consecration of life's every work to the selfless service of God and an infinite Love that at every place and every time pours forth its illimitable grace to all that seek after it.

It (the life), then, is, and should be, the latest
hope for the soul's onward striving, and their belief has not
been utterly vain, for the life has a channel to deliver, telling
of a consecration of life's every work to the selfless service
of God and an infinite love that is every place and every time
ours forth its limitless grace to all that seek after it.

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